

Youth ! Arise, Awake and Adopt the Right Path of Life

(A compact Self-Guide for the modern students and youth on the "Right Path of Life" for laying a proper and strong foundation of life during their youth period and for living a successful, purposeful, prosperous, happy and peaceful human life upon this earth plane)

Volume - 7

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This book is meant for free distribution amongst the modern students and youth, with a fervent prayer to them to kindly study the book earnestly and carefully and put the knowledge gained from the teachings contained in the lessons of the book into practice in their day-to-day life sincerely and diligently, for their own highest good and supreme welfare.

Views of Students and Youth, Teachers and Professors, Educationists and Academicians, School, College and University Administrators, Editors of News Papers and all other Readers, on this book are humbly and earnestly invited in the following address:-

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LESSON - 4

POWERFUL MIND — THE SECOND FOUNDATION OF SUCCESSFUL HUMAN LIFE (Contd.)

POWERFUL MIND

D. MEMORY-CULTURE

(SWAMI SIVANANDA)

He who dwells in the subconscious mind or Chitta, and in memory, and who is within this memory, whom the Chitta and memory do not know, whose body is the memory (and subconscious mind), who rules the memory and Chitta from within, is thy Self, Inner Ruler (Immortal Atman, Antaryami, Amritam). My silent adorations and prostrations to this Inner Ruler!

Memory-culture is very, very important. It brings success in God-realisation as well. A forgetful man always fails in his endeavours. The manager gets displeased with a forgetful clerk. A forgetful man commits serious mistakes again and again. A man with strong and retentive memory gets sanguine success in all his ventures and undertakings. He who has memory can conduct his business-affairs very successfully, remember credits and debits, and keep accounts in a satisfactory manner. A student who has a retentive memory will get success in all his examinations. Intelligence is only one-tenth of memory.

The Sanskrit term for memory is Smriti. Smarana is remembering. This is the function of the subconscious mind or Chitta. The Samskaras of thinking and acting are deeply impressed in the Chitta. The Chitta is like the sensitive plate of a camera. It is like the sensitive plate of a gramophone. All the impressions are indelibly recorded there. Whenever you make an attempt to remember the past events or things, they come back to the surface of the conscious mind through the trapdoor. Just as the man enters the stage from the side-curtains, just as the prisoner comes out of the jail through a small door in the big

main gate, so also the impressions come out through the trapdoor in the form of big waves of thought or mental image. If you have a clairvoyant vision or astral eye, you can clearly watch all subterranean movements of these images in the subterranean workshop of the mind or the underground mental factory. The term 'memory' is used in two senses. We say, "Mr. John has got a good memory." Here it means that Mr. John's capacity of the mind to store up its past experiences is very good. Sometimes you say, "I have no memory of that incident." Here it means you cannot bring out to the surface of the conscious mind in its original form, the incident that occurred some years ago. It is an act of remembering.

If the experience is fresh, you can have a complete recall of your past experience through memory. You cannot get any new knowledge through memory. It is only a repetition.

In ordinary recollection, there is a temporal coefficient. In personal memory, there is a specific coefficient. That which acts together with another is a coefficient. In mathematics, the numerical or literal factor prefixed to an unknown quantity in an algebraic term is coefficient.

Suppose you have received a nice fan as a present from your friend. When you use the fan, it sometimes reminds you of your friend. You think of him for a short time. This fan serves as cause for memory (Udbodhaka or Smriti-hetu).

The following are the four good characteristics of good memory: (i) If you read once a passage and if you can reproduce the same nicely, it is a sign to indicate that you have a good memory. This is termed Sugamata. (ii) If you can reproduce the same thing without increase or decrease (addition or subtraction), it is called Avaikalya. (iii) If you can preserve a fact or passage or anything for a very considerable period, it is called retentive

memory, Dharana. (iv) If you can reproduce a passage at once without any difficulty when it is needed, it is called Upaharana.

If your brother is a coward, the sight of a similar man in another place will bring to your mind the memory of your brother. This memory is due to similarity of objects (Sadrisyata).

Suppose you have seen a dwarf at Madras. When you see a very tall man or Patagonian, this will remind you of the dwarf whom you saw at Madras. The sight of a big palace will remind you of a peasant's hut or a Sannyasin's grass Kutir on the banks of the Ganga. This memory is due to dissimilarity in objects (Viparitata).

When you walk along the road on a stormy day and happen to see a fallen tree, you conclude that the tree has fallen owing to the storm. In this case, the memory is due to the relation between cause and effect (Karya-Karana-Sambandha).

A knowledge of the working of the subconscious mind is very necessary for those who want to develop their memory. Most of the mental operations take place in the subconscious mind. The conscious mind takes some rest, but the subconscious mind works throughout the twenty-four hours. It is the subconscious mind that brings the answer like a flash of lightning in the early morning, when you fail to get a solution at night even though you rake your brain for hours and hours together. It is again the subconscious mind that wakes you up in the morning when you go to sleep with a firm resolve: "I should catch the train at 3 a.m.". It is a most faithful servant, provided you know the technique of manipulating it in a masterly manner. You can extract tremendous work from it. All the prodigies, or intellectual giants of the world, know the act of handling and tapping this portion of the mind. The Chitta analyses, sorts, arranges facts and figures, takes out all old records from the various pigeon-holes of the mind, and produces in the early morning or at any

time, a clear balance-sheet of facts for your perusal and review. Before you retire to bed, give orders to the Chitta to do any kind of work. It will keep the answer ready in the early morning. When you are in a dilemma, when you are at your wits' end and confused, when you do not know how to solve a serious problem, give orders to the Chitta—a definite command—placing before it the nature of your difficulty. In the morning at 4 a.m., you will have an unambiguous answer. Do this. Practise this. Then only you will have wonderful conviction and strength. You will find a very reliable friend in the subconscious mind.

A man of strong and retentive memory can turn out tremendous work in the twinkling of an eye. He can master any subject or art in a short time. Dr. Samuel Johnson used to repeat passages after passages in a few minutes, by committing them to memory. His mother was quite astonished. She used to ask him: "Johnson, my dear child, get this passage by heart." Before she would ascend the staircase, he would follow her and say, "Mamma, mamma, I know this by heart." He would then repeat them then and there. What a wonderful memory Johnson had! What one man has achieved can also be achieved by another: this is an immutable Law of Nature.

If you read the introduction of "Pranava Vada" written by Sri Babu Bhagawan Das of Varanasi, you will find that he collected all the materials for his big book in three volumes by hearing the recitations from a Pandit who was blind from his very birth and who knew the contents of many books by heart. He knew the numbers of the pages also. You go to Bakshi Sur who lives in a village in Lakhimpur - Kheri in Uttar Pradesh. He has a wonderful memory. He is a blind man from his birth. He can quote all the verses from Surdas and Tulasidas. He can quote the page numbers, too. How he learnt this, how he committed this to memory, is a Wonder of wonders today!

In olden days, Sanskrit scholars got by heart all the Vedas. The Gurukula system of education has its own advantages. It develops memory to a very marvellous extent. Even now there is a Sanskrit Pandit in Varanasi who has committed to memory the whole of the Upanishads, the Gita, the Brahma Sutras, Khandana Khadyam, Chit Sukhi and Advaita Siddhi, the greatest monumental work on Vedanta. There are small boys in the Darshan Maha Vidyalaya of Sri Raghavachari in Rishikesh who have committed to memory the eighteen chapters of the Gita. The Gurukula system of education is wonderful. The students of modern universities cannot compete with the students of the Gurukula system.

Brahmacharya, dietetic adjustment and discipline of Indriyas are very essential for developing memory. The seminal energy has a direct, intimate connection with the cells of the Chitta and brain. You should try your extreme level best to preserve every drop of your vital fluid. Bad memory is due largely to heavy losses of this life-giving energy. Young school and college students do not realise the vital importance of Brahmacharya. They grope in utter darkness. Their minds are filled with passion by daily looking at the nude pictures and embraces in the film-shows. They indulge in novel-reading that excites passion. They always seek bad company. They are conceited, arrogant and self-willed. They never care to approach the sages who can give them inspiring lessons on the science of the Self, memory-culture, and conquest of passion. They eat whatever they like. They have no idea of Sattvic diet and effects of unwholesome food on the different compartments of the brain. They have no knowledge of discipline of Indriyas and the science of dietetics. Hence they fail, and fail miserably too, in their lives and lead a cheerless, gloomy life in darkness and despair. This is their only mistake. Those who are careful in Brahmacharya and food, those who have Satsanga with Sadhus and Sannyasins,

are always quite safe. They become quite successful in their lives. Even if they commit mistakes, they are then and there corrected by wise men.

There are Udbodhakas or Smriti-hetus that bring things to memory. The sight of a wrist-watch brings the recollection of your friend who presented a wrist-watch to you. The law of association is of immense help in developing your memory. The remembrance of a word that ends in 'ity, such as "cupidity", "avidity", etc., will bring to memory other words such as "stupidity", "superiority", "inferiority", etc. The remembrance of a word that ends in 'tic', such as "romantic", will bring to memory other words as "fantastic." In this way, you can remember things. You will have to group things like this in the various pigeon-holes of your brain. Connect one thing or event with another of a like nature. Then all these things will come back to your memory quite readily and willingly.

EXERCISES FOR MEMORY-CULTURE

I

Here are some easy exercises for memory-culture. Sit on Virasana or Padmasana. Close your eyes. Imagine there is a big garden. In one corner there are jessamine flowers, in another roses, in another Champak, in another lily of the valley. First think of the jessamine, then rotate the mind to roses, then to Champak, and then to lily. Again bring back the mind to jessamine. Revolve the mind like this for two or three minutes. Look at the map of the heavens at night and count the stars in a small localised area. On Thursday morning, try to remember the dietetic preparations, vegetables, kinds of Dhal, etc., that were prepared on Wednesday. This is another kind of exercise.

II

Study one important Sloka from the Gita. Find out parallel lines in the Ramayana, the Bhagavata, the Upanishads, the Yoga

Vasishtha and the Bible, and connect all these passages and keep them in your mental disposition or pigeon-holes of the brain.

III

Bring back the word 'V-I-B-G-Y-O-R' to memory. Try to remember the various colour such as violet, indigo, blue, green, yellow, orange and red. Coin your code words to help you for remembering. Every one of you can have your own code words.

IV

Coin your catch-words, some that start with A, some with B, some others with R, some that end with 'tion, some with 'ness. Here are some sentences:—

“An Austrian army arrived at Aurangabad.” “Be bold, but be benevolent.” “Cunning camels carried caravans.” “Doctor Dadabhai died during Dipavali.” “Examination is a great botheration to the Hindu nation whose sole occupation is cultivation.” “If you do not want to study, hang that Matriculation and take to meditation. This is a sure way for Salvation.” “If you combine Satsanga and Kirtan with Meditation, this will form a good spiritual emulsion.” “This is my firm conviction after mature deliberation and careful consideration.” Here, you find all words ending in 'tion. This is a specimen for you. You can do in your own way. Every one of you have creative power of your own.

V

Japa, mediation, prayer, devotion, Sirshasana and Pranayama develop memory wonderfully. Here is a short description of Sirshasana. (For detailed particulars, vide the book “YOGA ASANAS”.) Sirshasana is the king of all Asanas. Spread a fourfold blanket. Rest the head over locked fingers, and slowly raise the legs up. Then slowly bring down the legs without jerks. Take the help of a wall or any of your friends in the beginning. Do it for a minute; and gradually increase the time to ten minutes. It removes diseases of the eyes, ears, nerves,

blood, stomach, intestines, gonorrhoea, spermatorrhoea, dyspepsia, constipation, etc. It augments the digestive fire and improves appetite. It is a blood and nervine tonic. Intellectual faculties develop. It helps Brahmacharya and makes you an Urdhvareto-Yogi.

VI

Here are some assertions and affirmations for developing memory. Meditate and assert on them:—

- | | |
|--|----------|
| 1. I have a very strong memory | Om Om Om |
| 2. I can remember things now nicely | Om Om Om |
| 3. My memory has very much improved | Om Om Om |
| 4. I have a wonderful retentive memory | Om Om Om |

VII

“Day by day, in every way, I am becoming better and better through the grace of my Lord.” Repeat this formula several times daily. Meditate on this in the morning also for five minutes. You will have wonderful improvement. Meditate on the meaning and feel also.

I shall speak a word on keeping a memorandum notebook. Daily jot down in the notebook, as soon as you rise from bed in the morning, the various kinds of work that you have to do in the course of the day; and see if all have been carried out to the very letter. Tick each item as soon as it is finished.

VIII

Take a packet of playing cards and have six cards from out of it and see them very carefully. Then place them in front of you with face downwards. Through memory, jot down in order on a piece of paper, their exact description. You can slowly increase the number to ten or twelve. This exercise will also develop memory.

IX

Lie down in any easy chair quite comfortably. Recollect the picture of your father. Close your eyes. Just try to bring out a clear description of some of his distinct physical characteristics and marks on the body, such as the kind of nose, hair, the condition of his eyes, forehead, lips, ears, chest, whether broad or pigeon chest, whether sinewy or thin arms, whether there is symmetry in his limbs, the condition of his teeth, his gait, way of talking, special distinctive features and physiognomy, special traits that attract people, the nature of his voice, special marks or moles on the different parts of his body, etc. After seeing once any great man, try to bring out the special qualities and features that have arrested your attention.

X

Try to remember synonymous terms. This will increase your vocabulary of words and you will be able to write beautiful essays and deliver excellent lectures. You will become a great journalist. You can write thrilling books. Take, for instance, the word “compassion” or “generosity.” Try to bring out the synonymous terms such as “pity”, “mercy”, “liberality”, “munificence”, etc. Through the law of association, connect one idea with several other ideas. This will develop your memory. The thought of ‘coffee’ will bring the idea of Nilgiri Hills where it is grown, and the idea of ‘Stane’s Company’ who sell coffee seeds, and the idea of the founder of this company. Through the law of ‘Sadrishya’ or similarity, you may remember other places in the world where coffee is cultivated. You can remember the advantages of coffee. The idea of coffee will bring in the idea of similar beverages, like tea, and the name of ‘Lipton’ and his native place, how he started his business and how he became a millionaire in the end, and the nectar of immortality which the Yogins drink. All these ideas will come in your mind and flash out in the twinkling of an eye. Keep a small notebook in your

pocket. Whenever good ideas flash in your mind, then and there jot them down. Take hints. Later on, you can develop them. Jot down in your diary, the lessons you have received from great Mahatmas.

XI

Just walk briskly along the Mall in Lahore or the Chowringhee in Calcutta. Have a keen acute perception. See what is going on in this shopping centre. As soon as you reach home, jot down on a piece of paper the names of shops, and the important articles that are exhibited in the showrooms outside. Next day, walk along the same road and verify your jottings.

XII

Try to remember the different makes of motor cars, such as Ford, Studebaker, Chevrolet, Standard, Morris, Austin, etc., and their prices. Recollect the names of different philosophers of the world in the East and in the West, such as Sankara, Ramanuja, Kant, Plato, etc.. and their important works and teachings. Compare the Eastern with the Western philosophy. Do this closing your eyes. This will develop your memory in subtle things. The memory of gross things is easier than the memory of events of philosophical ideas. Events can be more easily remembered than names of persons, because there are associations for events. Names are arbitrary. There is intimate connection between memory, keen observation and acute hearing. Mind thinks on objects that are seen or heard. One who has developed his power of hearing and seeing can have better memory.

XIII

There is yet another exercise. Just imagine that there is a canvas-sheet in front of you which contains the pictures of nine animals. In the first top-row, there are lion, leopard and cow; in the second row, horse, zebra and bear; and in the third row,

elephant, buffalo and tiger. Practise this exercise daily. First try to remember the animals in the first row, then in the second, and lastly in the third. Now try to remember, in this order, from above downwards, viz., lion, horse, elephant; leopard, zebra, buffalo; cow, bear and tiger. You can change the order in many other ways, like, algebraical formulae, or permutation and combination. Exercises on the memory of different kinds of gross and subtle sounds, tastes of articles of food, touch of various articles, various shades of colours, etc., can also be practised with advantage.

XIV

Read one or two pages in a book. Then close the book, and try to remember the important ideas and reproduce them in your mind. Write down the contents in your own way, or bring out an exact reproduction on a piece of paper. Compare and contrast these passages with other passages that are contained in other books. Draw your own conclusions and inferences. This practice will develop wonderfully your memory and will enable you to remember things for a long time. Mark the important passages with a red pencil on the sides, and have thin blue or red underlinings wherever it is necessary. In underlining, do not blot out the words. Take down notes of what you have read, and turn over the pages of the notebook which contains in a nutshell all the important points, every week. Whenever you read a book, keep a dictionary by your side. Never read without a dictionary. When you come across difficult words that you do not understand, refer to the dictionary and note down the words and their meanings in a separate notebook. Many lazy students skip over the pages of books that they do not understand, and imagine their meanings in their own ways. This is anything but desirable. Those who practise in the above manner will become truly learned and great within a short time. They will have a rich vocabulary of words and can command huge audiences. They

can become distinguished orators, journalists, and able writers of prose and poetry. The Sanskrit term for the power of memory is Smriti-Sakti. The power of memory needs the help of grasping power and Dharana Sakti. Dharana Sakti is the power of holding ideas. Those who have good Dharana Sakti will have remarkable retentive memory.

XV

Practise self-analysis or self-examination for ten minutes before you go to bed. Sit comfortably on a chair. Close your eyes. Think of all actions, good and bad, that you did during the course of the day. Think of all the mistakes that you committed consciously or unconsciously. On the first day, you may not be able to find out even two or three mistakes in your actions, because you are not in the habit of doing so. But, by daily, regular and systematic practice, you will be able to visualise clearly the actions and mistakes of the day. Even an hour will not be sufficient to review the actions. The mind becomes subtle and sharp by the practice of introspection. It goes more and more inward. It dissects, analyses, groups, classifies and brings the list of actions in the twinkling of an eye. This practice will develop your memory and reduce the number of mistakes. You can note down all the actions and mistakes the same night, or the following morning, in your diary. A time will come when you will do only good actions, without committing even a single mistake. The name of Benjamin Franklin comes to my mind just now.

XVI

Study several times the eighteen chapters of the Gita. Try to remember the Slokas according to different headings such as those that treat of Viveka, Vairagya, Sadachara, development of Gunas, three kinds of Tapas and the three kinds of food as described in the seventeenth chapter, Slokas concerning Pranayama, practice of concentration, Bhakti Yoga, Jnana Yoga, Hatha Yoga, Raja Yoga, control of mind, etc. You must group

them and classify in the pigeon-holes of your mind. This is also a kind of exercise for memory-culture. Select any kind of exercise that suits your taste, temperament and capacity.

XVII

Develop the power of describing exactly a cricket match or a football match. Watch the game. As soon as you reach home, note it down on paper, correct the same then and there, and bring out a clear copy. It is always better to keep paper and pencil in your pocket, or a diary. Busy people, and those whose aim in life is to become great in every way, should always take down notes then and there, even while walking. They can take hints or shorthand notes in their own way, and can develop them at leisure. Whenever good ideas roll in your mind, at once jot down in your pocket-notebook. This is the keynote to success in life in all endeavours, in every walk of life, and in all spheres of activity. Practise, feel and enjoy. Mere theorising will not do. You should become a practical man. I always hammer on this point again and again, and I am not at all tired of doing so. I want you to become a great man of admirable ideals, and not in the unknown future, but right now this very minute. Give your full heart to me. I have got my own ways of developing a man quickly and perfectly. I have a strong passion for service, but I do not get the right type of aspirants. Attend a conference, and reproduce the speeches in your own style and send them to newspapers. You can become a first-class A-I reporter and able journalist in a short time. Visit Badri Narayan, Gangotri or Gomukh where the Ganga takes its source, and take down notes. Give a full description of what all you have seen in the daily papers and journals. All these practices will undoubtedly develop your memory.

XVIII

Here is yet another exercise for memory-culture. Close your eyes. Sit comfortably in a chair. Try to remember the richest

persons of the world such as the Nizam of Hyderabad, Rockefeller, Ford; the biggest rivers in the world such as the Amazon, the Nile, the Brahmaputra; and the seven holy rivers in India, viz., the Ganga, the Yamuna, the Godavari, the Sarasvati, the Narmada, the Sindhu and the Kaveri. You can remember the Sloka:—

*“Gange Cha Yamune Chaiva Godavari Sarasvati
Narmade Sindhu Kaveri Jale Asmin Sannidhim Kuru.”*

Remember the waterfalls, the Niagara, the Sivasamudram; remember the lakes, Chilka in the Ganjam District, Manasarovar in the Himalayas, etc. You can recall to mind such poets as the immortal Kalidas, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Milton, Shakespeare, Byron and Keats; essayists such as Johnson and Emerson; philosophers such as Sankara, Ramanuja, Kant, Hegel and Plato; scientists such as Faraday, Newton, Bose, Raman and Einstein; Jnanis such as Sankara, Dattatreya, Yajnavalkya, Madalasa, Gargi, Sulabha, Vamadeva and Jadabharata; Yogins such as Jnanadeva, Bhartihari, Trilinga Swami and Sadasiva Brahman; Bhaktas such Gouranga Maha Prabhu, Tulasidas, Ramdas, Hafiz, Mira; the Pancha Kanyakas such as Kunti, Draupadi, Mandodari, Ahalya and Anasuya; the seven Rishis such as Atri, Bhrigu, Vasishtha, Gautama, Kasyapa, Pulastya and Angirasa; the seven Chiranjivis such as Asvatthama, Bali, Vyasa, Hanuman, Vibhishana, Kripa and Parasurama; the twelve Brahma-Vidya Gurus such as Brahma, Vishnu, Siva, Vasishtha, Sakti, Parasara, Vyasa, Suka Deva, Gaudapada, Govindapada, Sankaracharya and Krishna. This practice will develop memory.

XIX

You must know the art of extracting work from the subconscious mind. If you want to remember forgotten passages in Shakespeare's works, give a definite command to the subconscious mind just before you retire to bed. You can talk to

your subconscious mind just in the same manner as you talk to your friend or servant. You can say: “Look here, subconscious mind. I have forgotten an important passage in the ‘Merchant of Venice’, and another in ‘As you like it’, which I studied in my college days. Bring them now to my memory. I want them very badly tomorrow morning. Do it quickly.” Give the order in very clear terms. The following morning, it will place them like a flash before you. If it fails to bring in the next morning, give the command again on the next day. On the following day, you may get the answer. Sometimes, the subconscious mind is very busy, and the brain gets congested. The brain is under high tension or pressure on account of tight work. You will have to wait with a calm mind. You will have to repeat the command once or twice. You must allow sufficient time for the subconscious mind and not disturb it frequently.

A judge has to write summaries of evidences and prepare judgments. His brain sometimes gets confused. He gets bewildered. He is not able to arrive at the proper solution. In such cases, the subconscious mind will beautifully work for him. It will arrange the facts and figures in perfect order, and place before him a clear summary. He will have to simply reproduce them on paper the following morning.

In matters which demand too much thinking and long deliberation, you will have to wait for some days before getting an answer from the subconscious mind. Again and again you will have to give command to the subconscious mind at nights, and watch for the results. You need not trouble the subconscious mind daily by commanding it. Repeat the command once or twice. You will have to place facts and figures before it, and make it understand clearly what you exactly want.

INTEREST DEVELOPS MEMORY

A Doctor has got good memory in the remembrance of drugs in the *Materia Medica*. because he has keen interest in the treatment of diseases. He cannot remember even in a single item

in matters relating to politics, because he has no interest in the subject. A lawyer can remember all the rulings of the Allahabad, Bombay and Madras High Courts. He cannot remember a few things in a cricket match, for he has no interest in it.

You will have to create interest first in a certain subject, and the memory of things will automatically follow. One should be in perfect knowledge of the subject and should have a general knowledge of all subjects. A versatile or all-round nature is highly creditable and laudable. Try to become a versatile genius. A strong and retentive memory, or a powerful will, and the practice of daily concentration and meditation will certainly make you a versatile prodigy.

HEALTH AND MIND

A strong man will have a good memory. A weak delicate man of poor health will have a bad memory. Health plays an important part in memory-culture. Therefore try to keep a high standard of health, vigour and vitality by taking proper food, exercise, etc.

In conclusion, I request you to attend to these exercises — Brahmacharya, diet, Satsanga and various other things that are inculcated herein — very carefully. Blessed is he who develops memory, for, he will be a very successful man in the world, and will attain God as he can remember Him quite easily.

E. WILL-CULTURE**(SWAMI SIVANANDA)**

Now comes another important culture. The student should pay great attention in this direction, because he will derive immense benefits. Will is Atmabal. Will is dynamic soul-force. Will, if it is rendered pure and irresistible, can work wonders. There is nothing impossible for a man of strong will to achieve in the three worlds. The vast majority of persons have no consciousness of will or mind or intellect, though they talk much on 'will and mind'. The will has become impure and weak through Vasanas (desires). When a desire is controlled, it becomes changed into will. The sexual energy, the muscular energy, anger, etc., are all transmuted into will-force when they are controlled. The fewer the desires, the stronger the will.

Napoleon had a strong will and so he won sanguine success in wars. Visvamitra had a strong will and therefore he created a third world for King Trisanku. Dattatreya had a strong will and so he created a woman by mere willing. Shams Tabreiz had a strong will and so he caused the sun to come down to roast his piece of mutton. Jnanadeva had a strong will and therefore he made the Masjid to move. All Jnanins and Yogins have very strong will.

The force of Brahmacharya is at the back of the will. No will-culture is possible without Brahmacharya. Will is another name for the force of celibacy. Every drop of semen is a magnetic force. Sat-sankalpa is the pure willing of Jnanins. They can do anything by Sat-sankalpa. The Yogi or Jnani creates through pure will. Chudalai wanted to test her husband Sikhidhvaja. She willed and created an imaginary husband for her. She willed and stood up in the air to convince him of her powers. Immediately Sikhidhvaja accepted her as his Guru.

FORMULAE FOR DEVELOPING WILL

Get up at 4 a.m. and sit on Virasana or Padmasana and meditate on these formulae. Repeat them mentally with feeling.

1. My will is pure, strong and irresistible. Om Om Om
2. I can do anything through my will now. Om Om Om
3. I have an invincible will. Om Om Om

Meditation on the immortal Atman develops the will. It is the best method. Do not use the will in wrong directions. You will have a hopeless fall. Do not test the strength of your will in the beginning. Wait till it becomes strong and pure. Will is the king of mental powers. Will is Ichha-Sakti; Prana is Kriya-Sakti; intellect is Jnana-Sikti. When the will operates, all the mental powers, such as power of judgment, power of memory, power of grasping, Dharana Sakti (power of holding), reasoning power, discriminating power, power of inference, power of reflection—all these come into play within the twinkling of an eye. They come to aid the will-power, their master.

HOW TO APPLY WILL

Be not troubled and anxious if there is delay in the development of the will. The will is bound to carry out all your behests in the long run. You can treat any ailment of other people by mere willing. Will: "Let the patient be free from this disease." This will really come to pass immediately. You will be really astonished. You can treat any disease in your body by mere willing. Will strongly: "I must see Mr. John at 8 a.m." The man will be at your door at the exact time. Will alone is your obedient and willing servant. It will fetch anything you want. Will strongly: "I must get that appointment." You will surely succeed. If there is delay, apply the will over again. In the beginning you will find it a bit difficult to apply the will, because it is a new practice for you. Gradually you will know how to apply the will. You will understand the knack and technique, and the will can be applied in the twinkling of an eye, and the object also will be realised in

the twinkling of an eye. The stronger the will, the quicker the realisation. Will strongly: “I want to eat mangoes.” The mangoes are at your door. They will come any how. Practice will make you perfect. Experiences will teach you.

You will have to be very careful in the use of the will. It is always advisable to reserve the will-force for the achievement of higher spiritual success. Worldly success is nothing. This life is a mere bubble. This world is a long dream. Worldly success will not give you everlasting peace and happiness. Try your will in one or two instances in worldly matters. You will understand and realise its power. Then apply the will in the realisation of the Self. Ignore mundane affairs. They are worthless like straw or dung. Become an Atma-Jnani or Raja Yogi. This alone will give you absolute satisfaction. You are an emperor of the three worlds now. All petty desires will vanish now. Thou art an “Apta-Kama” now—a Jnani in whom all desires are gratified. Is this not really an exalted state?

HOW TO DEVELOP THE WILL-POWER

Attention, power of endurance, overcoming aversion, dislikes and irritations, fortitude in suffering, Tapas (austerities such as standing on one foot, sitting in the hot sun) or Panchagni Tapas before five fires, standing in cold water in piercing winter, raising the hands above and keeping in the same position for an hour, fasting, patience, command of temper, forbearance, clemency, mental power of endurance, firmness in meeting danger, power of resistance or attack, Satyagraha, keeping up daily diary—all pave a long way in developing the will. One should patiently hear the words of others even though they are not interesting and charming. He should not fret and fume. Patient hearing develops will and wins the hearts of others. One should do actions or tasks that are uninteresting. This also develops the will-power. The actions that are not interesting will become interesting after sometime.

Never complain against bad environments. Create your own mental world wherever you remain and wherever you go. There are some difficulties and disadvantages wherever you go. If the mind deludes you, at every moment and at every step, try to overcome the obstacles and difficulties by suitable means. Do not try to run away from bad, unfavourable environments. God has placed you there to make you grow quickly.

If you get all sorts of comforts in a place, you will not grow strong. Your mind will be puzzled in a new place when you cannot get these comforts. Therefore, make the best use of all places. Never complain against surroundings and environments. Live in your own mental world. Nothing can upset your mind. You will find Raga-Dvesha even in the eternal snowy regions of the Himalayas, near Gangotri. You cannot get an ideal place and ideal surroundings in any part of the world. Kashmir is very cool; the scenery is very enchanting; but Pissus (small insects like fleas) trouble you at night; you cannot sleep. Varanasi is a centre of Sanskrit learning, but it is notorious for hot winds in summer. Uttarkasi in the Himalayas is beautiful, but you cannot get vegetables or fruits there; the cold is so very biting in winter. This world is a relative plane of good and evil. Remember this point at all times. Try to live happily in any place, under any condition. You will become a strong and dynamic personality. This is a great secret. Keep this in your pocket and unlock the Elysian regions, the spiritual realms and the immortal abode. You can get sanguine success in any undertaking. You can conquer any difficulty.

The practice of concentration is of great help to strengthen the will. You must have an intelligent understanding of the habits of the mind—how it wanders and how it operates. You must know easy and effective methods to control the wandering of the mind. The practice of thought-culture, the practice of concentration, the practice of memory-culture, are all allied

subjects. All these are of immense help in the practice of will-culture. You cannot draw line of demarcation to denote where the practice of concentration or memory-culture ends and the practice of will-culture begins. There is no hard and fast rule. For further particulars on the practice of concentration, please see the article “Control of Mind-wandering.”

Mr. Gladstone and Mr. Balfour could go to deep sleep the moment they went to bed through mere willing. They had such a strong will. Even Mahatma Gandhi had this practice. They could get up in the morning at any time they wanted, to the very minute. They had so trained their subconscious mind. The subconscious mind was their obedient servant. It would wake them up at the very second. Every one of you should develop this habit through will and become a Gandhi, a Gladstone or a Balfour. Generally, the vast majority of persons simply roll in their beds for hours together and do not get sound sleep even for half an hour. It is the quality of sleep, and not the quantity, that gives refreshment. Sound sleep for even an hour is quite sufficient to refresh the body and revitalise the mind. The moment you go to bed, simply relax the mind and give the suggestion, “I will have good sleep now.” Do not think of anything. Napoleon had this habit. Even when the bugle was blowing and the drums were beating on the battlefield, he would be snoring. His subconscious mind would wake him up at the very second he wanted to get up. With a cool mind, Napoleon would appear like a lion on the battlefield. One should train himself to sleep in running cars, trains, and when moving in the aeroplanes, even in a sitting posture. This practice is of immense help for busy medical practitioners, advocates and businessmen, who have to do immense work daily and a good deal of travelling. Life has become so very complex nowadays that busy people do not find time to get enough sleep. Whenever they find some leisure, even for five minutes, they should close their eyes in any place

and go to sleep for a short time. This would give great rest. They can continue their further activities. This kind of practice is a blessing to busy people. Their nerves are under great tension and pressure. By relaxing them every now and then, they could refresh themselves and keep quite fit for further activities. One should be able to sleep on the platforms of Howrah or Bombay railway stations when trains are moving at all times. This is a wonderful practice that gives immense strength.

Dr. Annie Besant used to write editorial columns when moving in the cars. There are some busy doctors who read newspapers even when they are in the water closets. They keep their minds fully occupied. The practice of keeping the mind fully occupied is the best of the practices for keeping up physical and mental Brahmacharya. Those who want to become magnetic and dynamic personalities or prodigies should utilise every second to the best possible advantage and should try to grow mentally, morally and spiritually, every second. Idle gossiping should be given up entirely. Every one of us should realise the value of time. Will is bound to become dynamic if one utilises his time very profitably. Application and tenacity, interest and attention, patience and perseverance, faith and self-reliance, can make a man a wonderful world-figure.

CAPACITY AND WILL

You will have to apply your will according to your capacity. Otherwise, your will deteriorates. You will be discouraged. This is one important point. Make a programme of work or daily routine, according to your capacity, and see that it is carried out daily. Keep only a few items. If you keep several items which cannot be executed in a day, which are beyond your capacity, your interest will slowly wane and your enthusiasm will gradually decline. Your energy will be dissipated and scattered. You will get brain-fag. Whatever you wish to do daily must be carried out to the very letter. Nimbarka Acharya

willed that the sun should not pass beyond the Nim tree that was in front of his house; it came to pass exactly. Nalayani willed that there would be no daybreak; it came to pass accordingly. These people had strong will-power. If you also 'will' like this in the beginning, when you are a neophyte, when you have developed your will to a very small extent, you cannot succeed.

Thinking too much is a hindrance in the execution by the will. It brings confusion, diffidence and procrastination. There is slackening of the force of the will. The opportunity will slip away. You may hesitate to put the thing in action. Think for sometime correctly and then decide. As soon as you have resolved, you must will immediately. There must not be any unnecessary delay. Sometimes you 'will' and do not succeed. This is due to lack of right thinking and right feeling. You must think rightly and, at the same time, feel rightly. Then the 'will' is bound to succeed. Right feeling should invariably accompany right thinking.

DESIRE AND WILL

Divine will is all-powerful. God wills, and everything comes into being the very second. Man wills, but it takes a long time for attaining a thing or materialisation of the desired object as his will is weak. Man thinks, wills, and slowly gets the desired objects after sometime. Man also creates. If his will is pure and strong, man also gets the objects in the twinkling of an eye. Mere wish will not suffice for the attainment of the desired thing. You will have to add to it definite purpose. Wish or desire is a small ripple in the mind-lake, but 'will' is a power which executes the desires. Will is volition. It is the power of choosing or determining.

Desire and will are different things altogether. 'Desire' is a longing for certain possessions, while 'will' is the power of determination (Sankalpa) without any motive whatsoever to enjoy anything. Desire is Vasana which pertains to the mind; will is Ichcha, which is identical with the Law and is characteristic of

the Self—the universal consciousness. God's 'will' and God's 'law' are one and the same.

When the 'Self' determines the activity, uninfluenced by attractions or repulsions towards surrounding objects, the 'will' is manifested. When outer attractions or repulsions determine the activity and the man is drawn hither and thither by these, deaf to the voice of the Self, unconscious of the Inner Ruler, then the desire is seen.

FREE WILL

The man must learn to separate himself from the vehicles in which he desires, thinks and acts, to know them as part of the not-self, as material external to the life. Thus, the energy that went out to the objects in the lower desires becomes the higher desires, guided by the mind, and is prepared to be transmuted into 'will'.

As the lower mind emerges into the higher, and the higher into that which is wisdom, the aspect of pure 'will' emerges as the power of the spirit, self-determined, self-ruled, in perfect harmony with the supreme will, and therefore free. Then only all bonds are broken and the spirit is unconstrained by anything outside itself. Then and then alone can the 'will' be said to be free.

HAVE A COOL AND BALANCED MIND

He who is attempting to develop the 'will' should always try to keep a cool head. He should keep a balanced mind under all conditions. He will have to train or discipline the mind. It is worth practising. Balance of mind is one of the vital characteristics of a developed Jnani or Yogi. That Yogi who can keep a balanced mind at all times is really a strong and happy man. He will get sanguine success in all his undertakings. You may fail to maintain the balance in fifty attempts, but, from the fifty-first endeavour, you will gain strength of 'will'. You will slowly manifest balance of mind. You should not be discouraged in the beginning.

Remember the story of 'Bruce and the Spider'. Bruce learnt from the spider. He failed seven times, but succeeded in the war in his eighth attempt.

If a serious calamity occurs, your mind should not be upset. Just keep the mind cool and calm. Have presence of mind. Do not cry over spilt milk. Anyhow it has come to pass. You will have to face it with a cheerful countenance. Try to make the best of things. Remember the maxim: "What cannot be cured must be endured." Find out methods to tide over the difficulty. Keep always an unruffled mind. Do not be carried away by undue sentiments and bubbling emotions. Control them. Reflect how the calamity or trouble or catastrophe has come. There is always scope for suitable, effective, easy methods to tide over the crisis or trying situation. Allow the turban to pass off when your head is on the point of being knocked down. This is sagacity. This is prudence. This is wisdom. Develop discrimination and foresightedness. Many obstacles and calamities can be obviated quite easily. Do not brood over failures, defects and mistakes. This will weaken your 'will'. Let the defects remain there. They will be removed quickly when the 'will' grows and when the 'will' becomes purer and purer, stronger and stronger.

Just reflect for a while why you have failed in the attempt and try to be careful in the second attempt. Try to remove those factors that led to your failure in the previous attempt. Fortify yourself now. Be careful and vigilant. Be on the alert. Be active and nimble as the squirrel. You must be quick and, at the same time, efficient and capable. You should not commit mistakes.

HAVE PRESENCE OF MIND

Whenever you are in a dilemma or trying practical difficulty, never get discouraged. Never lose your heart. Use your skill nicely. Devise intelligent plans or schemes. Call forth all your latent energies or dormant faculties. When the house is

on fire, how alert you are! How skilfully and promptly you act at that particular moment! You do not know wherefrom the energy and power are flowing at that time. You are fully concentrated. You contrive skilful methods then and there to save your property, as much as possible, and to save the lives of your kinsmen dwelling in the house. Marvellous actions you do. Then you say at your leisure, when the difficulty is over, that some mysterious power of God had worked through you.

Always cut the Gordian knot at once. Do not waste time. When once you have resolved a definite line of action, carry it out dexterously and with cool and calculating deliberation and consideration. Procrastination is the thief of time. A 'Dirghasutri' (one who procrastinates) can never succeed in this life or in any of his undertakings.

"Procrastination is the thief of time" is a wise maxim.

SIGNS OF GROWING WILL

Unruffled state of the mind, poise, cheerfulness, inner strength, capacity to turn out difficult works, success in all undertakings, power to influence people, a magnetic and dynamic personality, magnetic aura on the face, sparkling eyes, steady gaze, powerful voice, a magnanimous gait, unyielding nature, fearlessness, etc., are some of the signs or symptoms that indicate that one's 'will' is growing.

BECOME AN EXPERT

You must become a Daksha (an expert) (Refer Chapter XII, 16, Gita) in deciding a line of action when you are in a dilemma in the twinkling of an eye that can bring sure and positive success. You must keep the instrument (Buddhi) very, very subtle and sharp. See how smart and adept the Kshatriya kings were

in olden days during warfares! A commander-in-chief is expected, to have this faculty to a remarkable degree. Sivaji and Napoleon had this virtue.

DEVELOP FIRMNESS AND PATIENCE

Unwavering firmness and patience are needed to tide over critical situations and gain success. Dhriti and Dhairya (presence of mind), and Samata (balance of mind) develop the 'will' to a remarkable degree.

CONCLUSION

Dear readers, I want to place before you another important point. I have not such words as 'cannot', 'difficult', 'impossible', 'weakness', etc., in my dictionary. Those who are attempting to develop their will-force should remove these words from their dictionary also. These are the expressions of a weakling or an effeminate person. These are the expressions of a timid woman. Become a lion. Become a spiritual hero, become a champion in the Adhyatmic field. By mere willing or chanting of Om, mountains can be crushed to powder. By mere willing, mountains should move. By mere willing, oceans should recede. By mere willing, all the waves of the ocean should subside. Lord Jesus did this and you also can do. Whatever one has achieved can also be attained by all if only they will. This is the grand Law of Nature. Mother Prakriti is unbiased. She looks up at all Her children with equal vision. Speak with dignity and force. Talk with emphasis in a noble manner.

Therefore, never entertain in your mind these negative terms. Understand the glory, splendour and power of the Self which is at the back of your mind, thought, will and memory. Understand the magnanimity and immortal nature of that hidden, inter-penetrating, indwelling Essence. Know that this Self is the storehouse for all knowledge, bliss, power, beauty, peace and joy. Feel that the sun, the moon and the stars, and fire do their

respective functions at your command. Feel that the air moves, rain showers, fire burns, rivers flow, sun shines, stars glitter, Indra, Agni and Yama do their respective functions at your bidding. Thou art the Glory of glories, Sun of suns, Light of lights, Holy of holies, Divinity of divinities, Devata of Devatas, Emperor of emperors, God of gods. Thou art Truth; Thou art Brahman; Thou art the imperishable, undecaying, undying Atman that pervades this whole universe. Assert your divine majesty. Recognise the Brahmic glory. Realise your freedom and Satchidananda nature, your centre, ideal, goal and heritage. Rest in that ocean of light, knowledge, Prema, peace, joy and bliss. Realise the significance of the great sentence *Tat Tvam Asi* (Thou art That) of the glorious Upanishads. OM! OM! OM!

F. THOUGHT-CULTURE

(SWAMI SIVANANDA)

This is also another vital subject. Very few people know this art or science. Even the so-called educated people are unaware of this fundamental education. All have random thinking. All sorts of loose thoughts of diverse kinds come and go in the mental factory. There is neither order nor harmony. There is neither rhythm nor reasoning. There is neither concord nor organised working. There is neither system nor discipline. All is in utter chaos and confusion. There is no clarification of ideas. You cannot think of one subject even for two minutes in an orderly and systematic manner. You have no understanding of the laws of thought and the laws of the mental plane. There is a perfect menagerie inside. All sorts of sensual thoughts fight amongst themselves to enter the mind of a sensualist and gain the upper hand. The eye Indriya struggles to bring its own thoughts. It wants to have sight-seeing. The ear Indriya wants to hear radio music, and so on. In the vast majority of persons, only base thoughts, lustful thoughts, thoughts of hatred, jealousy and fear, exist. They cannot entertain a single sublime divine thought even for a second. Their minds are so framed that the mental energy runs into sensual grooves.

Every man has got his own mental world, his own mode of thinking, his own ways of understanding things, and his own ways of acting. Just as the face and voice of every man differ from those of another man, the mode of thinking and understanding also differs. That is the reason why misunderstanding easily occurs between friends. One is not able to understand rightly the views of another. Hence friction, rupture and quarrel occur within a minute even amongst fast friends. The friendship does not last long. One should be in tune with the mental vibrations or thought vibrations of another man. Then only one can easily understand another. Lustful thoughts, thoughts of hatred, jealousy and selfishness, produce distorted images in

the mind and cause clouding of understanding, perversion of intellect, loss of memory, and confusion in the mind.

Every thought has got image, form, dimension, weight, shape, colour, etc. Thought is as much matter as a piece of stone. Thought moves, and passes from one man to another. Thought influences people. A man of powerful thought can influence readily people of weak thoughts. Telepathy is a branch of occult science wherein the Yogi can transmit messages to any man in any part of the world. Telepathy is the first telegraphic or telephonic system in this world, known to Yogins and occultists of ancient days.

A thought of anger or hatred sends arrows from the mental factory towards the person aimed at, harms the individual, sets up discord and disharmony in the thought-world, and comes back again to the sender and harms the sender also. If one can understand the effect and power of thought, he will be very careful in the manufacture of his thoughts in his mental laboratory. One should develop the faculty of producing only pure Sattvic thoughts by protracted mental discipline, dietetic adjustments, repetition of good Slokas with meaning, good company, study of divine books, Japa, meditation, Pranayama, prayer, etc. A good man can help his friend, even though he lives at a long distance, by good thoughts. You must not allow any evil thought to enter your mental factory. Watch always your thoughts. Avoid useless and base thinking, and reserve or conserve your mental energy. Energy is wasted in idle thinking.

Keep yourself always occupied in doing virtuous actions and the study of religious books. You can thereby cultivate good and sublime thoughts. Destroy random thinking. Take a subject, and think on its different aspects and bearings. When you think so on one subject, never allow any other thought to enter the conscious mind. Again withdraw the mind to the subject on hand. Take for instance: you begin to think on the life and teachings of Jagadguru Adi Sankaracharya. Think of his birthplace, his early

life, his character, his personality, his virtues, his preachings, his writings, his philosophy, some of the important utterings in his works or Slokas, the Siddhis that he exhibited from time to time, his Digvijaya, his four disciples, his four Maths, his commentary on the Gita, the Upanishads and the Brahma Sutras. Think of these items one by one, in order. Exhaust them. Again and again bring the mind to the point. Then take up another subject. By this practice, you will develop organised thinking. The mental images will gain intense strength and force. They will become clear-cut and well-defined. In ordinary persons, the mental images are distorted and undefined. Every thought has got an image. A table is a mental image plus some external something. Whatever you see outside has got its counterpart in the mind. The pupil is a small round thing in the eye. Retina is a small structure. How is it that the image of a big mountain seen through a small aperture or structure is cast on the mind? How does the big form of a mountain enter a tiny hole in the eye? This is a Marvel of marvels. The image of a mountain already exists in the mind. The mind is like a big, vast sheet of canvas cloth that contains all the pictures of the objects seen outside.

You must have a knowledge of the mental laws, viz., the law of association, the law of relativity, and the law of contiguity. Then you can develop thought-culture very easily. You can remember things through the 'law of association'. Brahmacharya and pure Sattvic diet are essential for thought-culture. Get up at 4 a.m. Sit on Virasana or Padmasana or Siddhasana. Repeat your Mantra — *Om* or *Ram* or *Hari Om* — for ten minutes, and then practise thought-culture. Have another sitting at night. When you think on one subject, do not allow other thoughts to enter. When you think of rose, think of the different kinds of roses only. Do not allow other thoughts to enter. When you think of mercy, think of mercy and mercy only. Do not think of

forgiveness and tolerance. When you study the Gita, do not think of tea or a cricket match. Be wholly occupied on the subject on hand.

Napoleon controlled his thoughts in this manner: "When I want to think of things more pleasant, I close up the cupboards of my mind revealing the more unpleasant things of life, and open up the cupboards containing the more pleasant thoughts. If I want to sleep, I close up all cupboards of my mind!"

Thought is both force and motion. Thought is dynamic. Thoughts move. There are various kinds of thoughts. There are instinctive thoughts. There are visual thoughts. There are auditory thoughts (thinking in terms of hearing). There are symbolic thoughts (thinking in terms of symbols). Some thoughts are habitual. There are kinaesthetic thoughts (thinking in terms of movement, as in playing a game). There are emotional thoughts. If there is mental fatigue, the processes of thought change from visual to auditory, and from auditory to kinaesthetic. There is intimate connection between thinking and respiration, as there is close relation between mind and *Prana*. Where the mind is concentrated, breathing becomes slow. If one thinks fast, the respiration also becomes fast. There is a thought-reading machine, known as psychograph, which registers correctly the type of thoughts.

THE SUBCONSCIOUS MIND

The subconscious mind is termed "Chitta", in Vedanta. Much of your subconsciousness consists of submerged experiences, memories thrown into the background, but recoverable.

When you show symptoms of losing your memory, as you grow old, the first symptom is that you find it difficult to remember the names of persons. The reason is not far to seek. All the names are arbitrary. They are like labels. There are no

associations along with the names. The mind generally remembers through associations, as the impressions become deep thereby. You can remember well in old age some passages that you had read in schools and colleges; but you find it difficult to remember in the evening a passage you read in the morning. The reason is that the mind has lost its Dharana-Sakti (power of grasping ideas). The brain-cells have degenerated. Those who overwork mentally, who do not observe the rules of Brahmacharya and who are afflicted with much cares and anxieties, worries, etc., lose their power of memory soon. Even in old age you can remember old events, as there are associations with events.

The mental processes are not limited to the field of consciousness alone. The field of subconscious mentation is of much greater extent than that of conscious mentation. Messages, when ready, come out like a flash from the subconscious mind to the surface of the conscious mind through the trapdoor in the subconscious mind or Chitta of the Vedantins. Only ten per cent of the mental activities come into the field of consciousness. At least ninety per cent of our mental life is subconscious. We sit and try to solve a problem, and fail. We look around, try again and again, but fail. Suddenly an idea dawns that leads to the solution of the problem. The subconscious processes were at work. Sometimes, you go to sleep at night with the thought: "I must get up very early in the morning to catch a train." This message is taken up by the subconscious mind and it is this subconscious mind that wakes you up unfailingly at the exact hour. The subconscious mind is your constant companion and sincere friend. You repeatedly fail at night to get a solution for a problem in arithmetic or geometry. In the morning, when you awake, you get a clear answer. This answer comes like a flash from the subconscious mind. Even in sleep it works without any rest incessantly. It arranges, classifies, compares, sorts all facts and figures, and works out a proper satisfactory solution. This is

all due to the subconscious mind. With the help of the subconscious mind you can change your vicious nature, by cultivating healthy virtuous qualities that are opposed to the undesirable ones. If you want to overcome fear, mentally deny that you have fear, and concentrate your attention upon the opposite quality, the ideal of courage. When courage is developed, fear vanishes away by itself. The positive always overpowers the negative. This is an infallible Law of Nature. This is Pratipaksha Bhavana of the Raja Yogins. You can acquire a liking for distasteful tasks and duties by cultivating a desire and taste for them. You can establish new habits, new ideas, new ideals, new tastes and new character in the subconscious mind by changing the old ones.

The functions of the Chitta are Smriti or Smarana, Dharana (attention) and Anusandhana (enquiry or investigation). When you do the Japa of a Mantra it is the Chitta that does the Smarana. It does a lot of work. It turns out better work than the mind or Buddhi.

All actions, enjoyments and experiences leave an imprint in the subconscious mind in the form of subtle impressions or residual potencies. The Samskaras are the roots of causing again Jati (life) and experiences of pleasure and pain. Revival of Samskaras induces memory. The Yogi dives deep inside and comes in direct contact with these Samskaras. He directly perceives them through the inner Yogic vision. By Samyama (concentration, meditation and Samadhi) on these Samskaras, he acquires knowledge of the previous lives. By doing Samyama on the Samskaras of others, the Yogi gets knowledge of their past lives also.

When you desire to remember a thing, you will have to make a psychic exertion. You will have to go up and down into the depths of the different levels of subconsciousness and then pick up the right thing from a curious mixture of multifarious

irrelevant matter. Just as the mail-sorter in the railway mail service takes up the right letter by moving the hand up and down along the different pigeon-holes, so also, the sorter (the subconscious mind), goes up and down along the pigeon-holes in this subconscious mind and brings the right thing to the level of normal consciousness. The subconscious mind can pick up the right thing from a heap of various matters.

A Samskara of an experience is formed or developed in the Chitta at the very moment when the mind is experiencing something. There is no gap between the present experience and the formation of a Samskara in the subconscious mind.

Smriti or memory is a function of the Chitta (sub-conscious mind). It is a separate faculty or category in Vedanta. Sometimes it is Antarangata, that comes under the mind. In the Sankhya philosophy, it is included in Buddhi or Mahat Tattva. The Chitta of Patanjali Maharshi's philosophy of Raja Yoga (*Yogah Chitta-Vritti-Nirodhah*) corresponds to the Antahkarana of Vedanta.

G. DHARANA

(Concentration)

(SWAMI SIVANANDA)

Dharana or concentration is the fixing of the mind on one place (object or idea). (III-1)

At other times (when there is no concentration), the seer has identification with the modifications of the mind. (1-4)

Mind is compared to quicksilver, because its rays are scattered over various objects. It is compared to a monkey, because it jumps from one object to another object. It is compared to a rutting furious elephant because of its passionate impetuosity. It is known by the name 'Great Bird' because it jumps from one object to another just as a bird jumps from one twig to another, from one tree to another.

Some western psychologists hold: "The mind that wanders aimlessly can be made to move in a small limited circle only, by the practice of concentration. It cannot be fixed on one point only. If it is fixed on one point only then inhibition of the mind will take place. There is death for the mind. Nothing can be achieved when there is inhibition of the mind. So there is no use of inhibiting the mind." This is not right. Complete control of the mind can be attained when all the thought-waves are thoroughly extirpated. The yogi works wonders by his one-pointedness of mind. He knows the hidden treasures of the soul with the help of the mighty all-penetrating searchlight generated by one-pointedness of mind. After one-pointedness is attained you have to achieve full restraint. In this stage all modifications subside completely. The mind becomes quite blank. Then the yogi destroys the blank mind also, by identifying himself with the Supreme Purusha or Soul or Being from whom the mind borrows

its light. Then he obtains omniscience and final emancipation. These are matters that are unknown to our western psychologists. Hence, they grope in darkness. They have no idea of the Purusha who witnesses the activities of the mind.

Man is a complex social animal. He is a biological organism and so he is definitely characterised by the possession of certain physiological functions such as circulation of blood, digestion, respiration, excretion, etc. He is also definitely characterised by the possession of certain psychological functions, such as thinking, perception, memory, imagination, etc. He sees, thinks, tastes, smells and feels. Philosophically speaking, he is the image of God — nay he is God himself. He lost his divine glory by tasting the fruit of the forbidden tree. He can regain his lost divinity by mental discipline and the practice of concentration.

In all of man's struggles and attempts at achieving any desired end there is in reality no necessity at all for him to go in quest of external forces to aid him. Man contains within himself vast resources of inherent power lying untapped or else only partially made use of.

It is because he has allowed his faculties to get scattered on a hundred different things that he fails to achieve anything great, despite his inherent possibilities. If he intelligently regulates and applies them, quick and concrete results will accrue.

To learn to rationally and effectively use the existing forces, man need not wait for any striking new methods to be invented to guide him. Since the dawn of creation nature herself abounds in instructive examples and lessons to aid man in every walk of life. Observation will tell us that every force in nature, when allowed to flow loosely over a wide area, moves slowly and with comparatively less power than it would do if gathered together in one mass and directed through a single restricted outlet.

This gathering together and bringing to bear of a force at a given point on any object, idea or action, forms the process of concentration. The concentrated application of a force makes

for maximum results in minimum time and with minimum effort.

Examples of the power generated by a concentration of force are cited: (1) The sluggish and leisurely flow of a river, dammed and accumulated, rushes out with an amazing force through the sluice. (2) The phenomenon of ton-loads of cargo in heavy wagons being hauled or propelled by the power of steam, concentrated in the boiler of the engine. Also, the clattering and displacement of the covering lid of a cauldron when the latter commences to boil very much is a most common domestic sight. (3) The normally warm sunrays become suddenly so hot as to burn up objects when centralised and brought into focus through a lens. (4) The simplest and commonest action, where one unconsciously uses this principle, is noticed when a man wishing to hail another a good distance away automatically cups his palms and shouts through them.

The mind is like an unchained monkey. It has the power of attending to only one object at a time, although it is able to pass from one object to another with tremendous speed. The mind is ever restless. This is due to the force of rajas and passion. Concentration is necessary for success in material affairs. A man with an appreciable degree of concentration has more earning capacity and turns out more work in less time. Need I say that the yoga student will be amply rewarded for his effort in concentration?

During concentration the mind becomes calm, serene and steady. The various rays of the mind are collected and focussed on the object of meditation. There will be no tossing of the mind. One idea occupies the mind. The whole energy of the mind is concentrated on that one idea. The senses become still. They do not function. When there is deep concentration, there is no consciousness of the body and surroundings. He who can practise real concentration for half or one hour will have tremendous psychic powers. He will also be very powerful. There is no limit

to the power of the human mind. The more concentrated it is, the more power is brought to bear on one point. Man is born to concentrate the mind on God after collecting the mental rays that are dissipated on various objects. That is his important duty. He forgets his duty on account of attachment for family, children, money, power, position, respect, name and fame.

When you study a book with profound interest you do not hear if a man shouts and calls you by your name. You do not see a person when he stands in front of you. You do not smell the sweet fragrance of flowers that are placed on the table by your side. This is concentration or one-pointedness of mind. The mind is fixed firmly on one thing. You must have such a deep concentration when you think of God or the Atman. It is easy to concentrate the mind on a worldly object, because the mind takes interest in it naturally through force of habit. The grooves are already cut in the brain. You will have to train the mind gradually by daily practice of concentration, by fixing it again and again on the image of God, or the Self within. The mind will not move now to external objects, as it experiences immense joy from the practice of concentration.

Concentration is fixing the mind on an external object or an internal point. There can be no concentration without something upon which the mind may rest. A definite purpose, interest and attention will bring success in concentration.

The senses draw you out and perturb your peace of mind. If your mind is restless, you cannot make any progress. When the rays of the mind are collected by practice, the mind becomes concentrated and you get bliss from within. Silence the bubbling thoughts and calm the emotions.

Concentration as Part of Raja Yoga

Dharana is the sixth stage or limb of ashtanga yoga, or raja yoga of Patanjali Maharshi.

Real raja yoga starts from concentration. Concentration in a spiritual sense means the one-pointedness of the mind. It is the fixing of one's mind on the deity of one's choice. Once a Sanskrit scholar approached Kabir and asked him: "O Kabir, what are you doing now?" Kabir replied: "O pandit, I am detaching the mind from worldly objects and attaching it to the lotus feet of the Lord."

A well trained-mind can be fixed at will upon any object, either inside or outside, to the exclusion of all else. For example, once there was a workman who used to manufacture arrows. Once he was very busy at his work. He was so much absorbed in his work that he did not notice even a big party of the Raja with his retinue passing in front of his shop. Such must be the nature of your concentration when you fix your mind on God. You must have the one idea of God and God alone. No doubt it takes some time to have complete one-pointedness of mind. You will have to struggle very hard to have single-minded concentration. Sri Dattatreya took the above arrow-maker as one of his gurus.

Arjuna had wonderful concentration. He learnt the science of archery from Dronacharya. A dead bird was tied to a post in such a way that its reflection was cast in a basin of water right beneath on the ground. Arjuna saw the reflection of the bird in the basin of water and aimed successfully in hitting the right eye of the actual bird tied to the post above.

This is concentration. To attain concentration you should drive off all useless thoughts of the world. You must be entirely free from all base desires of a worldly nature. You should substitute divine thoughts in their stead. Right conduct, postures, pranayama and abstraction from sensual objects will pave the way to achieving rapid success in concentration. Concentration is required not only in the spiritual path, but also in every walk of life. A man without concentration is a failure in life.

The practice of concentration and the practice of pranayama are interdependent. If you practise pranayama you will get concentration. He who has a steady posture and has purified his nerves and the vital sheath by the constant practice of pranayama will be able to concentrate easily. Natural pranayama follows the practice of concentration.

There are different practices according to different temperaments. For some the practice of pranayama will be easy to start with, for others the practice of concentration will be easy to begin with. Concentration will be intense if you remove all distractions. A true celibate who has preserved his energy will have wonderful concentration.

Meditation follows concentration. Samadhi follows meditation. The state of being liberated while living follows the attainment of nirvikalpa samadhi, which is free from all thoughts of duality. It leads to emancipation from the wheel of birth and death. Therefore, concentration is the first and foremost thing an aspirant should acquire on the spiritual path.

The mind is compared in the Hindu scriptures to a lake or ocean. The thoughts arising from the mind are compared to the waves of the ocean. You can see your reflection clearly on the water of the ocean only when all the waves on the surface subside completely and become still. So also, you can realise the Self, the Light of lights, only when all the thought-waves in the mind-lake are stilled.

Benefits of Concentration

The sum total of the pleasures of the whole world is nothing when compared to the bliss derived through concentration and meditation. Do not give up the practice of concentration at any cost. Plod on. Have patience, perseverance, cheerfulness, tenacity and application. You will eventually succeed. Do not despair.

For a neophyte the practice of concentration is disgusting and tiring in the beginning. He has to cut new grooves in the mind and brain. After some months he will get great interest in concentration. He will enjoy a new kind of happiness, the bliss of concentration. He will become restless if he fails to enjoy this new kind of happiness even for one day. Concentration is the only way to get rid of worldly miseries and tribulations. Your only duty is to practise concentration. You have taken this physical body to practise concentration and through concentration to realise the Self. Charity and the greatest sacrificial ceremonies are nothing when compared with concentration. They are playthings only.

Through dispassion, pratyahara and the practice of concentration the dissipated rays of the wandering mind are slowly collected. Through steady practice it is rendered one-pointed. How happy and strong is that yogi who has a one-pointed mind! He can turn out voluminous work in the twinkling of an eye.

When the rays of the mind are scattered over diverse objects, you get pain. When the rays are gathered and collected by practice, the mind becomes concentrated and you get bliss from within.

When you see your dear friend after six years, the happiness that you get is not from the person but from within yourself. The mind becomes concentrated for the time being and you get happiness from within your own self.

Concentration is the only way to get rid of worldly miseries and tribulations. The practitioner will have very good health and a cheerful mental vision. He can get a penetrative insight. He can do any work with greater efficiency. Concentration purifies and calms the surging emotions, strengthens the current of thought and clarifies the ideas. Purify the mind first through yama and niyama. Concentration without purity is of no use.

When there is faith the mind can easily be concentrated on the subject to be understood and then the understanding quickly follows.

If you read with concentration the Bhagavad Gita, the Ramayana or the eleventh skandha of Bhagavatam several times, you will get new ideas each time. Through concentration you will get penetrative insight. Subtle esoteric meanings will flash out in the field of mental consciousness. You will understand the inner depths of philosophical significance.

By manipulating the mind you will be able to bring it under your control, make it work as you like and compel it to concentrate its powers as you desire. If you practise concentration for three hours daily you will have tremendous psychic power. You will have a strong will power.

If there is an inflammatory swelling on your back with throbbing pain you do not experience any pain at night when you are asleep. Only when the mind is connected with the diseased part through nerves and thinking do you begin to experience pain. If you can consciously withdraw the mind from the diseased part by concentrating it on God or any other attractive object you will not experience any pain even when you are wide awake. If you have a powerful will and strong power of endurance, then also you will not experience any pain. By constant thinking of any trouble or disease you only augment your pain and suffering. Whenever there is pain in the body, practise concentration on your tutelary deity or study some philosophical books. The pain will vanish.

When there is deep concentration you will experience great joy and spiritual intoxication. You will forget the body and the surroundings. All the prana will be taken up to your head.

Concentrate. Meditate. Develop the powers of deep thinking and concentrated thinking. Many obscure points will be rendered quite clear. You will get answers and solutions from within.

As mind evolves you come into conscious relation with the mental currents of the minds of others, near and distant, living and dead.

You press the button and the light flashes out from the torch in the twinkling of an eye. Even so, the yogi concentrates and presses the button at the chakra — the centre between the two eyebrows — and the divine light flashes out immediately.

Concentration in Daily Life

A well-trained mind can be fixed at will upon any object, either inside or outside, to the exclusion of all other thoughts. Everybody possesses some ability to concentrate in some way. A man with an appreciable degree of concentration has more earning capacity and turns out more work in a shorter time. But, for spiritual progress concentration should be developed to a very high degree. In concentration there should be no strain on the brain. You should not fight or wrestle with the mind.

A scientist concentrates his mind and invents many things. Through concentration he opens the layers of the gross mind and penetrates deeply into higher regions of the mind and gets deeper knowledge. He concentrates all the energies of his mind into one focus and throws them out upon the materials he is analysing and so finds out their secrets.

This law is equally applicable to man in all branches of his life's activities. With the utmost concentrated and careful attention the surgeon executes minute operations. The deepest absorption marks the state of the technician, the engineer, architect or the expert painter engaged in drawing the minute details of a plan, chart or sketch, where accuracy is of paramount importance. Similar concentration is displayed by the skilled Swiss workmen who fashion the delicate parts of watches and other scientific instruments. Thus in every art and science. This is specially so in the spiritual line where the aspirant has to deal with forces internal.

Napoleon also had remarkable power of concentration. It is said that he had full control over his thoughts. He could draw one thought from a pigeon hole of his brain, dwell on that single thought as long as he liked and then shove it back into that pigeon hole. He had a peculiar brain with peculiar pigeon-holes!

Fix your mind on the work at hand. Give your complete heart and soul to it, if it be even a small work like peeling off the skin of a plantain fruit or squeezing a lemon. Never do anything haphazardly. Never take your meals in haste. Be calm and patient in all your actions. Never arrive at hasty conclusions. Never do a thing in haste. No work can be done successfully without calmness and concentration. Those who have attained success and become great have all possessed this indispensable virtue.

You must know very well the science of relaxation of the mind. You must be able to eliminate all other thoughts from the mind. You must think of rest only. You should consider yourself as if you were dead. Mentally repeat the names of the Lord and think of the ananda (bliss) aspect of His attributes. You will not have dreams. You will rest in blissful sleep. You will be refreshed very easily. Even if you sleep for two hours you will feel quite refreshed.

If you can always do your work with perfect attention and concentration you will be successful in every attempt. You will never meet with failure. When you sit for prayers and meditation, never think of your office work. When you work in the office never think of the child who is sick or any other household work. When you take bath do not think of games. When you sit for meals do not think of the work that is pending in the office. You must train yourself to attend to the work on hand with perfect one-pointedness. You can easily develop your will-power and memory. Concentration is the master key to open the gates of victory. If an ordinary man takes one hour to do a work, a man of good concentration will accomplish it in half an

hour with better efficiency than the former. You will become a mighty man.

He who has learnt to manipulate the mind will get the whole of nature under control.

Ethical Basis

Find out by serious introspection the various impediments that act as stumbling blocks in your concentration, and remove them with effort, one by one. Do not allow new thoughts and desires to crop up. Nip them in the bud through discrimination, enquiry, concentration and meditation.

Some foolish impatient students take to concentration at once without undergoing, in any manner, any preliminary training in ethics. This is a serious blunder. Ethical perfection is a matter of paramount importance.

Concentration without purity of mind is of no avail. There are some occultists who have concentration, but they do not have good character. That is the reason why they do not make any progress in the spiritual line.

Purify the mind first through the practice of right conduct and then take to the practice of concentration. Even if you do a little practice the effect is there. Nothing is lost. That is the immutable law of nature. You will not be able to detect the little improvement that has come out of a little practice, as you have no subtle and pure intellect. You must develop the virtues of dispassion, patience and perseverance to a maximum degree. You must have an unshakable conviction in the existence of God and in the efficacy of spiritual practices. You must have a strong determination: 'I will realise God right now in this very birth, nay in this very second. I will realise or die.'

Worldly pleasures intensify the desire for enjoying greater pleasures. Hence the mind of worldlings is very restless. There is no satisfaction and mental peace. Mind can never be

satisfied, whatever amount of pleasure you may store up for it. The more it enjoys the pleasures the more it wants them. So people are exceedingly troubled and bothered by their own minds. They are tired of their minds. Hence, in order to remove these botherations and troubles the rishis thought it best to deprive the mind of all sensual pleasures.

The more the mind is fixed on God, the more strength you will acquire. More concentration means more energy. Concentration opens the inner chambers of love or the realm of eternity. Concentration is a source of spiritual strength. Concentration is the sole key for opening the chamber of knowledge. When the mind has been concentrated or made extinct it cannot pinch one to seek for further pleasure, all botherations and troubles are removed forever and the person attains real peace.

A Hard Task

There are various kinds of impurities in the mind. It takes a long time for purification of the mind and to get a one-pointed mind. Concentration is a question of practice for several lives, it is the most difficult thing in the world. One should not get dejected after practising for some months or one or two years. You should have patience, adamant will and untiring persistence. You must be very regular in your practices, otherwise laziness and adverse forces will take you away from your goal.

An impatient man cannot practise concentration. He gets up from his seat within a few seconds, and he gives up the practice within a week or month. Concentration demands asinine patience for it is very disgusting and tiring in the beginning because you have to take the mental current upwards, like taking the Ganges water up to Badrinarayan. Later on it bestows infinite peace and bliss.

A bird tried to empty the ocean with a blade of grass. A doctor who discovered M & B 693 tablets made experiments of combinations 693 times. You must have patience like the bird and the doctor; then alone will you succeed in yoga.

Some medical students leave the medical college soon after joining it, as they find it disgusting to wash the pus in ulcers and dissect the dead bodies. They make a serious blunder. In the beginning it is loathsome. After studying pathology, medicine, operative surgery, morbid anatomy and bacteriology, the course will be very interesting in the final year. Many spiritual aspirants leave off the practice of concentration of mind after some time, as they find it difficult to practise. They make a grave mistake, like the medical students. In the beginning of the practice, when you struggle to get over body-consciousness, it will be disgusting and troublesome. It will be a physical wrestling. The emotions and thoughts (sankalpas) will be abundant. In the third year of practice the mind will be cool, pure and strong. You will derive immense joy.

Collect the rays of the mind. Just as you will have to take back with care your cloth that is fallen on a thorny plant by slowly removing the thorns one by one, so also you will have to collect back with care and exertion the dissipated rays of the mind that have been thrown over the sensual objects for very many years.

Building castles in the air is not concentration. It is wild jumping of the mind in the air. Do not mistake it for concentration or meditation. Check the habit of the mind through introspection and self-analysis.

If you are careless, if you are irregular in concentration, if your dispassion wanes, if you give up the practice for some days on account of laziness, the adverse forces will take you away from the true path of yoga. You will be stranded. It will be difficult for you to rise up again to the original height. Therefore be regular in concentration.

If the aspirant pursues what is not fitting, his progress will be painful and sluggish. He who pursues the right path gets easy progress and quick intuition. He who has no past conditioning or spiritual tendencies of previous births makes painful progress. One who has spiritual tendencies makes easy progress. In one whose nature is actually corrupt and whose controlling faculties are weak, progress is painful and intuition is sluggish, but to one of keen controlling faculties, progress is rapid and intuition is quick. In one overcome by ignorance, intuition is sluggish; in one not so overcome, intuition is rapid.

Those who practise concentration off and on will have a steady mind only occasionally. Sometimes the mind will begin to wander and will be quite unfit for application. You must have a mind that will obey you at all times sincerely, and carry out all your commands in the best possible manner at any time. Steady and systematic practice of raja yoga will make the mind very obedient and faithful. When you concentrate on any object do not wrestle with the mind. Avoid tension anywhere in the body or mind. Think gently of the object in a continuous manner. Do not allow the mind to wander away.

Useful Hints for Concentration

The vital point in concentration is to bring the mind to the same point or object again and again, by limiting its movements to a small circle in the beginning. That is the main aim. (A time will come when the mind will stick to one point alone. This is the fruit of your constant and protracted practice. The joy will be indescribable.)

For instance if you think of a rose, have all sorts of thoughts connected with the rose only. You can think of different kinds of roses that are grown in different parts of the world. You can think of various preparations that are made out of roses and their uses, etc. When you concentrate on a chair, it really means getting full and detailed knowledge of the chair — its different

parts; the particular wood out of which it is manufactured (such as devadaru, rosewood, etc.); its workmanship, durability and cost price; the degree of comfort it gives for the back, arms etc.; whether the parts can be detached and fixed again; whether it is manufactured on modern lines and made bug-proof; what sort of varnish or polish is used to make it durable, etc. Bring all thoughts connected with the chair and dwell on these ideas. Do not allow any other thought connected with another object to enter the mind. There should be one line of thought, one continuity of thought like the steady flow of oil from one vessel to another vessel or the continuous sound of a church bell.

You can gradually reduce the number of ideas and come to one idea of one subject. When this one idea also dies you get the super-conscious state or samadhi. When there is one idea it is called savikalpa samadhi, which is a lower stage. When this one idea also dies out and when there is not even a single idea, the mind becomes blank or void. There is mental vacuity. This is the stage of thoughtlessness described by Patanjali Maharshi in his raja yoga philosophy. You will have to rise above this blank vritti also and identify yourself with the Supreme Purusha or God, the silent witness of the mind who gives power and light to the mind. Then and then alone can you reach the highest goal of life.

Too much physical exertion, too much talking, too much eating, too much mixing with undesirable persons and too much walking will cause distraction of mind. Those who practise concentration must abandon these things. Whatever work you do, do it with perfect concentration. Never leave the work without finishing it completely.

Just as you take physical exercises and play games such as tennis and cricket in order to maintain physical health, you will have to maintain mental health also, by taking sattvic food, mental recreation of an innocent and harmless nature, change of thought, relaxation of mind by entertaining good, ennobling and sublime thoughts and by cultivating the habit of cheerfulness.

If you find it difficult to concentrate your mind within a room, go outside and sit in an open place or terrace, by the side of a river or in a quiet corner of a garden. You will have good concentration.

Remove the restlessness (rajas) and inertia (tamas) that envelop the purity (sattva) of the mind by pranayama, japa, enquiry into the nature of God and devotion. When it is freed from restlessness and inertia it will guide you. It will be your guru. Then the mind becomes fit for concentration.

Know that you are progressing in yoga and that purity is increasing when you are always cheerful, when the mind is even and concentrated.

If you want to increase your power of concentration you will have to reduce your worldly activities. You will have to observe the vow of silence every day for two hours or more. Then you will have more concentration and a richer inner life.

You should have real and intense thirst for God-realisation, then all obstacles will be obviated. Concentration will be quite easy for you then. Mere emotional bubbling for the time being out of sheer curiosity or for attaining psychic powers cannot bring any tangible results.

Train the mind in concentration on various objects, gross and subtle, and of various sizes — small, medium and big. In course of time a strong habit of concentration will be formed. The moment you sit for concentration the mood will come at once, quite easily. When you read a book you must read it with concentration. There is no use skipping over the pages in a hurried manner. Read one page in the Bhagavad Gita. Close the book. Concentrate on what you have read. Find parallel lines in the Mahabharata, Upanishads and Bhagavatam. Compare and contrast.

It will be very difficult to fix the mind on one thought in the beginning. Diminish the number of thoughts. Try to have the thought fixed on one subject.

Concentration will increase by lessening the number of thoughts. Certainly it is an uphill work to reduce the number of thoughts. In the beginning it will tax you much. The task will be very unpleasant. But later on you will rejoice, as you will get immense strength of mind and internal peace by reduction of thoughts. Armed with patience, perseverance, vigilance, fiery determination and iron will you can crush the thoughts easily just as you crush a lemon or orange with ease. After crushing them it will be easy for you to root them out. Mere crushing or suppression will not suffice. There may again be resurrection of thoughts. They should be totally eradicated, just as a loose tooth is rooted out.

So long as one's thoughts are not thoroughly destroyed through persistent practice, one should be ever concentrating his mind on one truth at a time. Through such unremitting practice, one-pointedness will accrue to the mind and instantly all the hosts of thoughts will vanish.

When concentration is deep and intense, none of the senses can operate.

Be cheerful and happy. Away with depression and gloom. There is nothing more infectious than depression. A depressed and gloomy man can radiate only unpleasant and morbid vibrations all around, he cannot radiate joy, peace and love. Therefore never come out of your room if you are depressed and gloomy lest you should spread the contagion around you. Live only to be a blessing to others. Radiate joy, love and peace. Depression eats the very core of your being and havocs like a canker. It is verily a deadly plague.

If emotions disturb you during concentration, do not mind them. They will pass away soon. If you try to drive them you will have to tax your will force. Have an indifferent attitude. The vedantin uses the formula, 'I don't care, get out; I am only a witness of the mental modifications,' to drive the emotions. The bhakta simply prays and help comes from God.

You will have to coax the mind in the beginning just as you coax children. Mind is also like an ignorant child. Speak to the mind: "O mind, why do you run after false, worthless, perishable objects? You will undergo countless sufferings. Look at Lord Krishna, the beauty of beauties. You will get everlasting happiness. Why do you run to hear worldly love songs? Hear the songs of the Lord. Hear the soul-stirring names of God. You will be elevated." The mind will gradually leave off its old vicious habits and get itself fixed at the lotus feet of the Lord.

A man whose mind is filled with passion and all sorts of fantastic desires can hardly concentrate on any object even for a second. His mind will be jumping like a baboon. Regulate and master the breath. Subdue the senses and fix the mind on any pleasing object. Associate ideas of holiness and purity with the object.

It is easier to fix the mind on a pleasing object such as jasmine flower, mango or orange, or a loving friend. It is difficult to fix the mind in the beginning on any object which it dislikes — such as faecal matter, a cobra, an enemy, an ugly face, etc. Practise concentration till the mind is well established in the object of concentration. When the mind runs away from the object of concentration, bring it back again and again to the object. Lord Krishna says: *As often as the wavering and unsteady mind goes forth, so often reining it in, let him bring it under the control of the Self.*" *Bhagavad Gita* (VI-26)

Exercises in Concentration

(1) Ask your friend to show you some playing cards and then remove them. Immediately name the cards you have seen, the suit, number, etc.

(2) Read two or three pages of a book. Abandon all distracting thoughts. Focus your attention carefully. Allow the mind to associate, classify, group and compare the facts of the subject matter. You will get a fund of knowledge on the subject. The mind skipping over the pages inadvertently is no use. There are students who read a book within a few hours. If you ask them to repeat important passages in the book, they will merely blink. If you attend to the subject on hand very carefully you will receive clear and strong impressions. If the impressions are strong you are cultivating a good memory.

(3) Sit in your favourite meditation pose about one foot from a watch. Concentrate on the 'tick-tick' sound. Whenever the mind runs let the sound of the watch bring it back, again and again. Just see how long the mind can be fixed continuously on the sound.

(4) Sit again in your favourite posture and keep a burning candle in front of you and try to concentrate on the flame. When your eyes get tired, close them and try to visualise the flame. Start by concentrating for half a minute and increase the time to five or ten minutes according to your taste, temperament and capacity. This will help you to go into deep concentration.

(5) Lie outside when the evening is balmy and concentrate on the moon. Whenever the mind runs, again and again bring it back to the image of the moon. This exercise is very beneficial in the case of persons having an emotional temperament.

(6) In the same manner, concentrate on any star you may single out from the millions of stars shining above.

(7) Lie outside in the open air and concentrate on the blue expansive sky above. Your mind will at once expand. You will feel elevated. The all-pervading sky will remind you of the infinite nature of the Self.

(8) Sit in a comfortable posture and concentrate on any one of the numerous abstract virtues such as mercy, love, peace and harmony. Dwell upon the virtue as long as you can.

(9) Sitting relaxed, listen to each heart-beat as the sound of OM. This will bring peace.

(10) Sit by the sea or the side of a river where you can hear a roaring sound like OM. Concentrate on that sound as long as you like. This is very thrilling and inspiring.

(11) Place a picture of Lord Jesus in front of you. Sit in your favourite meditative pose. With open eyes, gently concentrate on the picture until tears trickle down your cheeks. Rotate the mind on the cross, the chest, long hair, beautiful beard, round eyes and the various other limbs of his body; find the spiritual aura emanating from his head, and so on. Think of his divine attributes such as love, magnanimity, mercy and forbearance.

(12) Retire into a quiet room and sit in padmasana. Close the eyes. See what happens when you concentrate on an apple. You may think of its colour, shape, size and its different parts such as skin, pulp, seeds, etc. You may think of the places (Australia or Kashmir) where it is imported from. You may think of its acidic or sweet taste and its effects on the digestive system and blood. Through the law of association, ideas of some other fruits also may try to enter. The mind may entertain some other extraneous ideas. It may begin to wander about. It may think of meeting a friend at the railway station at 4 p.m. It may think of purchasing a towel or a tin of tea or biscuits. It may ponder over some unpleasant happening that occurred the previous day. You

must try to have a definite line of thought. There must not be any break in the line of thinking. You must not allow other thoughts, which are not connected with the object on hand, to enter. You will have to struggle hard to get success in this direction. The mind will try its level best to run in the old grooves and to take its old familiar road or beaten path. The attempt is somewhat like going up-hill.

(13) Some yogis try to become aware of the junction between waking and sleep, and then prolong that junction. This is a difficult task. At night sit in a quiet room and carefully watch the mind. You will be able to get at the state of junction. Practise regularly for three months. You will have success.

You will rejoice when you get even some success in concentration. Just as the laws of gravitation, cohesion, etc., operate in the physical plane, so also definite laws of thought — such as the law of association, law of relativity, law of continuity, etc. — operate in the mental plane or thought-world. Those who practise concentration should thoroughly understand these laws.

Concentration on Anahata Sounds

Dharana is the intense and perfect concentration of the mind upon some interior or exterior object or sound like anahata sounds, or any abstract idea, accompanied by complete abstraction (pratyahara) from everything pertaining to the external universe or the world of senses.

To concentrate on the anahata sounds, sit in your favourite asana. Close your eyes. Close the ears with your thumbs or plug the ears with wax or cotton. Try to hear the anahata sounds (mystic sounds). You will hear various kinds of sounds such as flute, violin, kettledrum, thunderstorm, conch, bells, the humming of a bee, etc. The sounds which you hear will make you deaf to all external sounds. In the beginning of your practice you will hear many loud sounds. They gradually increase in pitch, and

then are heard more and more subtly. You should try to distinguish more and more subtle sounds. You may change your concentration from the subtle to the gross, or gross to subtle, but you should not allow your mind to be diverted from them towards other objects. Generally you will hear sounds in your right ear and occasionally you may hear in your left ear also, but try to stick to the sound of one ear and you will get one-pointedness of mind. This is an easy way to capture the mind, because it is enchanted by the sweet sound just as a snake is hypnotised by the notes of the snake charmer.

The mind, having at first concentrated itself on any one sound, fixes firmly to that and is absorbed in it. The mind, becoming insensible to the external impressions, becomes one with the sound, as milk with water, and then becomes rapidly absorbed in the akasha (space) where chit (consciousness) prevails. Being indifferent towards all objects, and having controlled the passions, by continual practice you should concentrate your attention upon the sound which destroys the mind.

There are ten stages in the hearing of anahata sounds. (You may experience the tenth stage without the first nine stages through the initiation of a guru.) In the first stage the body becomes chin-chini; in the second, there is the breaking or affecting in the body. In the third there is the piercing; in the fourth the head shakes; in the fifth, the palate produces saliva; in the sixth, nectar is attained; in the seventh the knowledge of the hidden things in the world arises; in the eighth, paravaka is heard; in the ninth the body becomes invisible and the pure divine eye is developed; in the tenth you attain the state of Para Brahman. When the mind is destroyed, when virtues and sins are burnt away, you shine as the effulgent, immaculate, eternal, stainless, pure Brahman.

Objects of Concentration

The powers of the mind are always scattered and resist attempts at concentration. This oscillatory tendency is an innate characteristic of the mind stuff. Of the various methods employed to curtail and arrest this tossing of the mind, those using the medium of sound and sight stand prominent, because these two have a peculiar knack of catching the attention of and stilling the mind. It is seen how the hypnotist gently subdues the mind of the 'subject' by making the latter gaze steadily into his (the hypnotist's) eyes and listen to the monotonous repetition of his steady deliberate suggestions. We have still another clue to this when we note how the mother gently croons the little child into slumber. Also the schoolmaster's sharp, "Now then, boys, look here!" whenever he desires them to pay special attention to what he is saying, is significant. He feels that by getting them to fix their gaze on him he will draw the attention of their minds to his teaching as well.

There is great concentration when you play cards or chess, but the mind is not filled with pure and divine thoughts. The mental contents are of an undesirable nature. You can hardly experience a divine thrill, ecstasy and elevation of mind when it is filled with impure thoughts. Every object has its own mental associations. You will have to fill up the mind with sublime spiritual thoughts, then only will the mind be expurgated of all worldly thoughts. The picture of Lord Jesus or Buddha or Krishna is associated with sublime, soul-stirring ideas; chess and cards are associated with ideas of gambling, cheating and so forth.

Algebra, the science of abstract numbers cannot be understood without a preliminary practice and knowledge of arithmetic, the science of concrete numbers. Even so, abstract meditation is impossible without a preliminary practice of concentration on a concrete form in the beginning. Approach to the invisible and the unknown is to be made through the visible

and the known. Therefore in the course of spiritual discipline the methods of developing concentration take the form of gazing steadily at a dot, the symbol of the pranava (OM), the mantra or the figure of the favourite chosen deity. With some others it is done by the audible repetition of the mantra or the Lord's Name, or OM, or some select chants with regular rhythm and intonation. By these means the mind gradually gets indrawn and focussed. As this state deepens the person slowly loses awareness of his surroundings. Japa of any mantra and pranayama will steady the mind, remove its tossing and increase the power of concentration. Concentration can be done only if you are free from all distractions.

The mind should be trained to concentrate on gross objects in the beginning, and later on you can successfully concentrate on subtle objects and abstract ideas. Regularity in the practice is of paramount importance.

In trying to concentrate your mind or project a thought even, you will find that you require naturally to form images in your mind. You cannot help it. It is easy to concentrate the mind on external objects. The mind has a natural tendency to go outwards. Desire is a mode of the emotive mind. It has got a power of externalizing the mind.

The mind generally wanders wildly at random. When it thinks of one object, in a second it leaves that object and runs to another object like a monkey, then to a third object and so on. It cannot stick to one point. Do not allow it to create hundreds of thought forms. Make it hold on to one thought-form for half an hour. Make it shape itself into one shape and try to keep this shape for hours together through constant and incessant practice.

Introspect and watch the mind carefully. Live alone. Avoid company. Do not mix. This is important. Do not allow the mind to dissipate its energy in vain — on vain thoughts, vain worry, vain imagination and vain fear and forebodings.

Attention and Interest

You must evidence good interest in the practice of concentration, then only will your whole attention be directed towards the object upon which you wish to concentrate. There can really be no concentration without a remarkable degree of interest and attention shown by the practitioner. You must, therefore, know what these two words mean.

Attention is the steady application of the mind. It is the focussing of consciousness on some chosen object. Through attention you can develop your mental faculties and capacities. When there is attention there is also concentration. Attention should be cultivated gradually. It is not a special process. It is the whole mental process in one of its aspects.

Perception always involves attention. To perceive is to attend. Through attention you get a clear and distinct knowledge of objects. The entire energy is focussed on the object towards which attention is directed. Full and complete information is gained. During attention all the dissipated rays of the mind are collected. There is effort or struggle in attention. Through attention a deep impression of anything is made in the mind. If you have good attention you can attend to the matter in hand exclusively. An attentive man has a very good memory. He is very vigilant and circumspect. He is nimble and alert.

Attention plays a very great part in concentration. It is the basis of will. When it is properly guided and directed towards the internal world for the purpose of introspection, it will analyse the mind and illumine very many astounding facts for you.

Attention is focussing of consciousness. It is one of the signs of a trained will. It is found in men of strong mentality. It is a rare faculty. Brahmacharya wonderfully develops this power. It is easy to fasten the mind on an object which the mind likes

best, but a yogi who possesses this faculty can even fix the mind on an unpleasant object for a very long time. Attention can be cultivated and developed by persistent practice. All the great men of the world who have achieved greatness have risen up through this faculty.

Throw your entire attention into whatever you happen to be doing at the moment. Practise attention on unpleasant tasks from which you have been shrinking before, on account of their unpleasantness. Throw interest upon uninteresting objects and ideas. Hold them before your mind. Interest will slowly manifest. Many mental weaknesses will vanish. The mind will become stronger and stronger.

The force with which anything strikes the mind is generally in proportion to the degree of attention bestowed upon it. Moreover, the great art of memory is attention, and inattentive people have bad memories.

The human mind has the power of attending to only one object at a time, although it is able to pass from one object to another with a marvellous degree of speed, so rapidly in fact that some have held that it can grasp several things at a time. But the best authorities, eastern and western, hold to the 'single idea' theory as being correct. It agrees with one's daily experience also.

If you analyse carefully the mental functions or operations, no one process can be singled out and called attention. It is not possible to separate attention as a distinct function. You observe something, therefore you are attentive.

Attention belongs to every state of consciousness and is present in every field of consciousness. An attentive student in the spiritual path can listen to scriptures in an efficient manner. The military officer says, "Attention!" and the soldier is ready with his gun to carry out his behests. An attentive soldier alone can hit the mark. No one can get success either in temporal or spiritual pursuits without attention.

There are yogis who seem to do eight or ten or even a hundred things at a time. This is not strange. The whole secret lies in the fact that they have developed their attention to a remarkable degree. All the great men of the world possess this faculty in varying degrees.

Attention is of two kinds, viz., external attention and internal attention. When the attention is directed towards external objects, it is called external attention. When it is directed internally, within the mind upon mental objects and ideas, it is known as internal attention.

There are again two other kinds of attention viz., voluntary attention and involuntary attention. When the attention is directed towards some external object, by an effort of the will, it is called voluntary attention. When you have an express volition to attend to this or that, it is called voluntary attention. The man understands why he perceives. Some deliberate intention, incentive, goal or purpose is definitely involved. Voluntary attention needs effort, will, determination and some mental training. This is cultivated by practice and perseverance. The benefits derived by the practice of attention are incalculable. Involuntary attention is quite common. This does not demand any practice. There is no effort of the will. The attention is induced by the beauty and attractive nature of the object. Individuals perceive without knowing why and without instruction. Young children possess this power of involuntary attention to a greater degree than grown-up people.

If a man is not observant, he is not attentive. If he observes something, he is said to be attentive. Intention, purpose, hope, expectation, desire, belief, wish, knowledge, aim, goal and needs serve to determine attention. You will have to note carefully the degree, duration, range, forms, fluctuations and conflicts of attention.

There is great attention if the object is very pleasing.

You will have to create interest, then there will be attention. If the attention gets diminished, change your attention to another pleasant object. By patient training you can direct the mind to attend to an unpleasant object also, by creating interest. Then you will grow strong.

Some say that we attend to things because they are very interesting, but others are of the opinion that things are interesting because we attend to them or because we are likely to attend to them. We do not attend to them if they are not interesting.

By the constant practice and ever-renewed effort of attention, a subject that in the beginning was dry and uninteresting may become full of interest when you master it and learn its meaning and its issues. The power of concentrating your attention on the subject may become stronger.

If you closely watch, you will note that you observe different objects at different times. This perception of now one object and now another, when the physical conditions are constant, is known as fluctuations of attention. Attention is changing. The objects themselves change or fluctuate but there is no fluctuation in the observing individual himself. The mind has not been trained to bear prolonged attention. It gets disgusted through monotony and wants to run towards some other pleasing object. You may say, "I am going to attend to one thing only," but you will soon find that even though you attempt very hard, you suddenly perceive something else. The attention wavers.

Interest develops attention. It is difficult to fix the mind on an uninteresting object. When a professor is lecturing, when the subject is abstract and metaphysical many people leave the hall quietly because they cannot attend to a subject which is not interesting; but if the same professor sings and tells some interesting and thrilling stories, all people hear him with rapt attention. There is pin-drop silence. Lecturers should know the art of attracting the minds of the hearers. They will have to change

the tone to talk with force and emphasis. They will have to watch the audience and see whether they are attentive or not. They will have to change the subject matter for a short while and bring in some nice stories and suitable illustrations. They will have to look at the hearers directly in their eyes; So many things are necessary if one wants to become a successful lecturer, and wants to make the hearers attentive.

Napoleon, Gladstone, Arjuna and Jnanadeva all had wonderful powers of attention. They could fix their minds on any object. All scientists and occultists possess attention to a remarkable degree. They cultivate it by patient, regular and systematic practice. A judge and surgeon can get positive success in their respective professions only if they are endowed with the power of attention to a high degree.

When you do any work, plunge yourself in it. Forget yourself. Lose the self. Concentrate upon the work. Shut out all other thoughts. When you do one thing do not think of any other thing. When you study one book do not think of any other book. Fix the mind there steadily like the arrow-maker who had no consciousness of his surroundings. Eminent scientists are so busy and attentive in their experiments and researches in their laboratories that they forget to take food even for days together. Once a scientist was very busy at his work. His wife, who was living in another district, had a serious calamity. She came running up to him in the laboratory, with profuse tears in her eyes. Strange to say, the scientist was not a bit agitated. He was so very attentive to his work that he even forgot that she was his own wife! He said: "Madam! Weep for some more time. Let me make chemical analysis of your tears."

Once some gentleman invited Sir Isaac Newton for dinner. Newton repaired to his host's bungalow and took his seat in the drawing room. The gentleman forgot all about Newton, took his dinner and proceeded to his office. Newton was musing

within himself very absorbedly on some important point of science. He did not stir from his seat. He forgot all about his dinner and remained in the same chair like a statue for a long time. The next morning the host saw Newton in the drawing room and then only remembered having invited him for dinner. He felt sorry for his forgetfulness and apologised to Sir Isaac in a meek voice. What wonderful power of attention Sir Isaac Newton had! All geniuses possess this power to an infinite degree.

When a great misfortune has befallen you, or when you pass in review a certain course of conduct in order to find out the cause of the failure, it may take possession of your mind to such a degree that no effort of the will can make you cease from thinking over it. An article has to be written, a book is in the process of preparation; the work is carried on even if there is loss of sleep and you are unable to tear yourself away from it. The attention which began voluntarily has taken entire hold of the field of consciousness.

If you possess strong power of attention, anything that the mind receives will be deeply impressed. Only an attentive man can develop his will. A mixture of attention, application and interest can work wonders. There is no doubt of this. A man of ordinary intellect with highly developed attention can turn over more work than a highly intellectual man who has poor attention.

If you attend to one thing at a time you will get profound knowledge of that subject in its various aspects. The ordinary untrained man of the world generally attends to several things at a time. He allows many things to enter the gates of his mental factory. That is the reason why he has a clouded or turbid mind. There is no clarity of thought. He cannot do the process of analysis and synthesis. He is bewildered. He cannot express his ideas clearly, whereas the disciplined man can attend to a subject exclusively as long as he likes. He extracts full and detailed

information about one subject or object and then takes up another. Attention is an important faculty of a yogi.

Every little act demands concentration and your whole-hearted attention. If you want to pass a thread through the eye of the needle you must remove all fibres that are disjointed. Then you must make it a single fibre and with great care and one-pointed thought, pass the thread into the needle.

When you climb a mountain, or go down a steep descent, you will have to be very careful, otherwise you will slip and fall into the deep abyss below. When you ride on a bicycle, if you talk to your friend on the road a motor car might dash against you from behind. If you are a bit absent-minded when you walk on the road you will trip against a stone and fall down. A careless barber will cut the nose of his customer. A careless washerman will burn the clothes of his master. A sleepy aspirant will dash his head against the wall or fall down prostrate on the ground. Therefore, you must develop attention. Attention leads to concentration.

When you take up any work, apply your whole heart, full mind and soul to the work. Do it with perfect concentration. What another can do in six hours, you can turn out within half an hour, smoothly and in a methodical and orderly manner. This is yoga activity. You will be taken as an accomplished yogi. Even when you study, study the subject with perfect concentration. Do not allow the mind to wander. You must shut out all external sounds. Fix the gaze at one point. Do not allow the eyes to wander. When you study one subject do not think of a movie or sweetmeats or a friend. The whole world must be dead to you for the time being. Such must be the nature of your concentration. It will come to you after some steady and constant endeavours.

Be not troubled. Be not discouraged. There will be some delay. Wait coolly and patiently. Rome was not built in a day. It is all a question of time. Do not leave the practice even for a day,

even when you are sick. In your failure lies the secret of your success, and in your weakness the secret of your strength. Plod on. Push on. Gird up your loins. Nil desperandum. Be bold. March on courageously. Be cheerful. A brilliant future is awaiting thee. Practise. Feel. Rejoice. Become a yogi or world figure. Be sincere and earnest. Rise up. Awake. Thy light has come. O my dear children of Light and Immortality, It is 3.30 a.m., brahmamuhurta. This is the best time to practise concentration on Atman, memory and will-culture, and to catch hold of the mind. Sit in your favourite meditation posture and do vigorous practice now. May success and divine glory attend on thee. Melt the bubble mind in Brahman, the ocean of knowledge, and enjoy supreme bliss.

Hatha Yoga Techniques

Tratak is one of the cleansing techniques in the light of hatha yoga philosophy. Tratak also plays a very prominent part in raja yoga and jnana yoga.

Tratak is steady gazing. Write the word OM in black ink on the wall. Sit in front of the drawing. Concentrate on it with open eyes till tears come into the eyes. Then close the eyes. Visualise the picture of OM. Then open the eyes and again gaze till tears flow. Gradually increase the period. There are students who can gaze for one hour. Instead of OM you may draw a big black dot on white paper and fix it on the wall. Gaze at this black dot on the paper. The wall will present a golden colour during tratak.

You can also do tratak on a candle flame, a bright star or the moon, on any picture of the Lord — either Krishna, Rama, Siva or Lord Jesus.

Practise tratak for one minute on the first day. Gradually increase the period every week. Don't strain the eyes. Do it gently with ease and comfort, as long as you conveniently can. Repeat your mantra, Hari Om, Sri Ram or Gayatri during tratak.

In some people who have weak eye capillaries the eyes may become red. They need not be alarmed unnecessarily as the redness of the eyes will pass off quickly.

Practise tratak for six months. Then you can take up advanced lessons in concentration and meditation. Be regular and systematic in your sadhana. If there is a break, make up the deficiency or loss on the next day.

Tratak steadies the wandering mind and removes tossing of the mind. It gives tremendous power, removes a host of ophthalmic ailments and brings siddhis.

Tratak with open eyes is followed by visualisation, which is the calling up of a clear image of anything. Tratak and visualisation help a lot in concentration.

Gaze at the picture of the Lord (your tutelary deity) for a few minutes and then close your eyes. Try to visualise the picture mentally. You will have a well-defined or clear-cut picture of the Lord. When it fades, open your eyes and gaze. Repeat the process five or six times. You will be able to mentally visualise it clearly after some months' practice.

If you find it difficult to visualise the whole picture, try to visualise any part. Try to produce even a hazy picture. By repeated practice the hazy picture will assume a well-defined, clear-cut form. If you find this difficult, fix the mind on the effulgent light in the heart and take this as the form of the Lord or Devi.

Do not bother yourself if you are not able to have perfect visualisation of the picture of the Lord with closed eyes. Continue your practice vigorously and regularly. You will succeed. What is wanted is love for the Lord. Cultivate this more and more. Let it flow unceasingly and spontaneously. This is more important than visualisation,

Nasikagra-Drishti is fixing the gaze on the tip of the nose. This is also called the nasal gaze. Do not make any violent effort.

Gently look at the tip of the nose. Practise for one minute in the beginning. Gradually increase the time to half an hour or more. This practice steadies the mind and develops the power of concentration. Even when you walk you can keep up this practice.

Bhrumadhya-Drishti is gazing at the ajna chakra, between the two eyebrows. The seat of the mind is the ajna chakra. The mind can be controlled easily if you concentrate there. In this you should direct the gaze towards the ajna chakra with closed eyes. If you practise it with open eyes it may produce headaches and foreign particles may fall into the eyes. There may be distraction of the mind also. Do not strain the eyes. Practise gently from half a minute to half an hour. There must not be the least violence in this practice. Gradually increase the period. This yoga kriya removes tossing of the mind and develops concentration.

When you practise concentration at the tip of the nose you will experience various sorts of fragrance. When you concentrate between the eyebrows you will see lights. These are experiences to give you encouragement, to push you up in the spiritual path and convince you of the existence of transcendental or super-physical things. Do not stop your sadhana now.

You can concentrate also on the heart or anahata chakra. This is the seat of emotion and feeling. A bhakta should concentrate there. He who concentrates on the heart gets great bliss.

The crown of the head or sahasrara is another centre for concentration. Some vedantins concentrate there.

Stick to one centre of concentration. Cling to it tenaciously. Never change it. The guru will select a centre of concentration for you if you are a student of faith. If you are a man of self-reliance you can select a centre for yourself.

A hatha yogi tries to concentrate his mind by having his breath controlled through pranayama. Kumbhaka or retention

of breath also helps concentration. It checks the velocity of the mind and makes it move in smaller circles and ultimately curbs all its wanderings and thereby renders it fit for concentration.

The raja yogi tries to concentrate his mind by restraining the various modifications of the mind by not allowing the mind to assume various shapes of objects. He does not care for control of breath but his breath becomes necessarily controlled when his mind is concentrated.

H. DHYANA

(Meditation)

(SWAMI SIVANANDA)

A continuous flow of perceptions (or thought) is dhyana, meditation. (III-2)

1. What is Meditation?

Meditation is the flow of continuous thought of one thing, of God, the Atman. It is the keeping up of one idea of God alone always, like the continuous flow of oil.

Meditation follows concentration. When persisted in and perfected it brings about the experience of super-consciousness or samadhi, the ultimate state of Self-awareness or realisation.

That state of the mind wherein there are no thoughts, is meditation. Meditation proceeds from the mind. All worldly thoughts are shut out from the mind. The mind is filled or saturated with divine thoughts, with the divine glory, the divine presence. *“Though men should perform tapas standing on one leg for a period of one thousand years, it will not, in the least, be equal to one-sixteenth part of dhyana yoga (meditation).” Paingala Upanishad.*

Meditation is the only way to attain salvation. It kills all pains, sufferings and sorrows and destroys all causes of sorrow. It gives the vision of unity and induces a sense of oneness. Meditation is a balloon or a parachute or an aeroplane that helps the aspirant to soar high into the realms of eternal bliss, everlasting peace and undying joy.

Meditation is the royal road to attain God-head. It is the grand trunk road which takes the aspirant direct to the destination of divine consciousness. It is the mystic ladder which takes the yoga student from earth to heaven, it is the divine ladder that pushes them to the heights of asamprajnata samadhi, it is the

step in the staircase of unbounded intelligence to take the aspirant to the highest storey of non-dual meditation and kaivalya mukti (liberation) of a vedantin. Without it no spiritual progress is possible. It is the aerial ropeway that allows the devotee to glide easily to the other shore of samadhi and drink the honey of love and the nectar of immortality.

Every human being has within himself various tremendous powers, potentialities, capacities and latent faculties of which he has no conception. He is a magazine of power and knowledge. As he evolves he unfolds new powers, new faculties, new qualities. He must awaken these dormant powers and faculties by the practice of meditation and yoga. He must develop his will and control his senses and mind. He must purify himself and practise regular meditation. Then only can he become a superman or God-man; then only can he change his environment and influence others; then only can he subdue other minds, conquer internal and external nature and enter into the super-conscious state.

Just as the light is burning within the hurricane lamp, so also is the divine flame burning from time immemorial in the lamp of your heart. Close your eyes. Merge yourself within the divine flame. Plunge deep into the chambers of your heart. Meditate on this divine flame and become one with the flame of God.

If the wick within the lamp is small, the light will also be small. If the wick is big, the light also will be powerful. Similarly, if the jiva (individual soul) is pure, if he practises meditation, the manifestation or expression of the Self will be powerful. He will radiate a big light. If he is unregenerate and impure he will be like burnt up charcoal. The bigger the wick, the greater the light. Likewise, the purer the soul, the greater the expression.

Meditation is the only valuable asset for you. Success in yoga is possible only if the aspirant practises profound and constant meditation. To meditate is our foremost duty. It is for

that we have taken our birth here. To concentrate, to purify, to meditate and realise our essential divine nature is our foremost duty. Realisation cuts the knots of ignorance, desire and action and gives permanent satisfaction, everlasting peace and eternal bliss.

2. What Happens in Meditation?

During meditation the mind becomes calm, serene and steady. The various rays of the mind are collected and focussed on the object of meditation. There will be no tossing of the mind. One idea alone occupies the mind. The whole energy of the mind is concentrated on that one idea. The senses become still. They do not function. Where there is deep concentration there is no consciousness of the body and surroundings. He who has good concentration can visualise the picture of the Lord very clearly within the twinkling of an eye.

Do not try to drive away the unimportant thoughts. The more you try the more they will return, the more they will gain strength. You will tax your energy. Fill the mind with divine thoughts. The unimportant thoughts will gradually vanish.

All mental modifications such as anger, jealousy, hatred, etc., assume subtle forms when you practise meditation. They are thinned out. They should be eradicated in toto through samadhi or blissful union with the Lord. Then only are you quite safe. Latent mental impulses will be waiting for opportunities to assume a grave and expanded form. You should be very careful and vigilant.

An aspirant says: "I am able to meditate in one posture for three hours. In the end I become senseless but I do not fall on the ground." If there is real meditation you will never become senseless, you will experience perfect awareness. This other is a negative undesirable mental state. You will have to get over this state by keeping up perfect vigilance.

Those who practise meditation will find that they are more sensitive than the people who do not meditate and because of that the strain on the physical body is enormous.

Considerable changes take place in the mind, brain and the nervous system by the practice of meditation. New nerve currents, new vibrations, new avenues, new grooves, new cells, new channels are all formed. The whole mind and nervous system are remodelled. You will develop a new heart, a new mind, new sensations, new feelings, new modes of thinking and a new view of the universe (as God in manifestation). The purifying process leads to a deeper insight into Truth. This is the action of the grace of the Lord upon the soul in meditation.

When the mind becomes steady in meditation the eyeballs also become steady. A yogi whose mind is calm will have a steady eye. There will be no winking at all. The eyes will be lustrous, red or pure white.

In the beginning of your practice you may get jerks of the hands, legs, trunk and the whole body. Sometimes the jerk is very terrible. Do not be afraid, do not be troubled. It is nothing, it can do nothing. It is due to sudden muscular contraction from influence of new nerve stimuli, when the prana becomes slow and the outward vibrations make the mind come down from its union with the Lord to the level of physical consciousness. Remember that new nerve currents are formed now owing to the purification of the nadis. The jerks will pass off after some time. At times there is tremor of the body during meditation. This is due to the prana being taken up to the brain from the trunk, etc. in the process of meditation. Do not be afraid. Do not stop the meditation. You will have to pass through all these stages. When you get these you are improving, you are progressing. Plod on and persevere. Be cheerful. Help is from within, from the Inner Ruler. These are all new sensations. Be courageous and bold. Courage is an important qualification and

virtue for aspirants. Cultivate this positive quality.

When your meditation becomes deep you will lose consciousness of the body. You will feel that there is no body. You will experience immense joy. There will be mental consciousness. Some lose sensation in the legs, then in the spinal column, back, the trunk and the hands. When the sensation is lost in these parts it feels that the head is suspended in the air.

When you practise rigorous meditation, natural retention of breath without inhalation and exhalation will come by itself. When this comes you will enjoy immense peace and you will have one-pointed mind.

You will feel that will-power is radiating from you. Your consciousness will be deeper now. Thoughts of God will start the spiritual currents in the body. Do not check these currents. (If heat is produced in the head, apply butter, amalaka oil or brahmi oil. Take cold bath three times during summer. Take butter and sugar-candy.)

When you fix the mind, either on Sri Krishna, Lord Siva or the Atman, even for five minutes, sattva guna is infused into the mind. Subtle desires are thinned out. You feel peace and bliss during the five minutes. You can, with the subtle intellect, compare this bliss from meditation with the transitory sensual pleasures. You will find that this bliss from meditation is a million times superior to sensual pleasures. Meditate and feel this bliss. Then you will know the real value.

During meditation, when your mind is purer, you will be inspired. The mind will be composing fine poems and solving intricate problems of life. Stamp out these pure thoughts also. This is all dissipation of mental energy. Soar higher and higher in the Atman only.

Just as salt melts in water, the pure mind during meditation melts in silence in Brahman, its substratum.

The object of meditation will come before you much quicker if you practise regular meditation. You will feel as if you are covered by the object on which you meditate. It will seem as if the whole space is illumined. Sometimes you will experience the sound of ringing bells. You will feel the inner peace of the soul.

When your meditation becomes deep, you generally operate through the subtle causal body only. This becomes your normal consciousness. Yogis and bhaktas like Lord Gauranga, Tuka Ram and Tulsidas identified themselves with their causal body and had this as their normal consciousness. A bhakta, too, becomes one with Brahman. He has divine auspiciousness, yet he has a thin ethereal body. He keeps up his individuality. A whirlpool is one with the whole mass of the water. It has a separate existence also. Similar is the case with the bhakta who has a life with his causal body.

During meditation you will have no idea of time. You will not hear any sounds. You will forget your name and all sorts of relationships with others. You will have no consciousness of your body or surroundings. You will have equanimity of mind. You will not hear any sounds. There will be stoppage of up-going and down-going sensations. The consciousness of egoism will also gradually vanish. You will experience inexplicable joy and indescribable happiness. Gradually, reasoning and reflection also will cease.

After a short practice of meditation you will feel that the body gets lighter in a short time, say fifteen or thirty minutes, after you have taken your seat. You may be semi-conscious of the body also. There is a great deal of happiness owing to concentration. This happiness resulting from concentration-ananda (bliss) is quite different from sensual pleasures. You must be able to differentiate between these two pleasures through the intuitive mind rendered subtle by constant spiritual practice and

meditation. Concentration and meditation have a power to sharpen the intellect. A trained intellect can comprehend subtle, philosophical, abstruse problems beautifully well. A disciplined intellect that can differentiate between the happiness derived from concentration and deep meditation, and the happiness derived from worldly pleasures, will naturally run daily to enjoy this kind of new happiness. Such a mind will loathe sensual pleasures. There will be extreme abhorrence and positive aversion to objects. It is but natural, because this kind of happiness is more lasting, sustained, self-contained and real, as it emanates from the Atman. You can distinctly feel that the mind is moving, that it is leaving its seat in the brain, and that it is trying to go to its original abode. You know that it has left its old groove and is now passing into a new groove.

In the beginning the aspirant remains in a state of bliss for some time. He comes down. By constant practice of incessant meditation he continues to remain in that exalted state forever. Later on the body idea completely vanishes.

A sudden stroke of mystic illumination puts an end to all empirical existence altogether and the very idea or remembrance of such a thing as the world, or the narrow individuality of the spirit in this world, absolutely leaves.

3. Benefits of Meditation

This world is full of miseries and sufferings. If you want to get rid of the pains and afflictions of this worldly existence (samsara), you must practise meditation. Meditation is the pathway to divinity. It is the royal road to the kingdom of Brahman. It is a mysterious ladder which reaches from earth to heaven, from error to truth, from darkness to light, from pain to bliss, from restlessness to abiding peace, from ignorance to knowledge, from mortality to immortality. Meditation leads to knowledge of the Self which brings about eternal peace and supreme bliss. Meditation prepares you for the integral experiences of direct intuitive knowledge.

Truth is Brahman. Truth is Atman. Truth is quite pure and simple. You cannot realise the Truth without reflection and meditation. Be silent. Know thyself. Know That. Melt the mind in That.

The fire of meditation annihilates all foulness due to vice. Then suddenly comes knowledge of divine wisdom which directly leads to liberation or final emancipation.

Regular meditation opens the avenues of intuitional knowledge, makes the mind calm and steady, awakens an ecstatic feeling and brings the yoga student in contact with the source or the supreme Purusha. If there are doubts they are all cleared by themselves when you march on the path of dhyana yoga steadily. You will yourself feel the way to place your footstep in the next rung of the spiritual ladder. A mysterious inner voice will guide you.

If you wind a watch at night it will run smoothly for twenty-four hours. Even so, if you meditate for one or two hours in the brahmamuhurta (one and a half hours before sunrise) you can work very peacefully throughout the day. Nothing can disturb your mind. The whole system will be charged with spiritual vibrations.

Many of your doubts will be cleared by themselves during meditation. Some will have to wait for some time for the clearance of some doubts. However much the teacher explains to you, you cannot understand certain things at a certain time. You will have to evolve a little more. When you have evolved, those doubts which tormented you three years ago will become clear now.

Meditation gives a lot of spiritual strength, peace, new vigour and vitality. It is the best mental tonic. If a meditator gets irritated very often it shows he is not doing good uninterrupted meditation. There is something wrong in his spiritual practices (sadhana).

Meditation develops strong and pure thoughts. Mental images are clear-cut and well-defined. Good thoughts are well-grounded. Through clarification of ideas, confusion vanishes.

Meditation is a powerful tonic. It is a mental and nervine tonic as well. The holy vibrations penetrate all the cells of the body and cure its diseases. Those who meditate save doctor's bills. The powerful, soothing waves that arise during meditation exercise a benign influence on the mind, nerves, organs and cells of the body. The divine energy freely flows from the feet of the Lord to the different systems of the sadhaka (aspirant). Meditation itself is a panacea for all diseases. (If you are seriously ailing you can do japa and light meditation while lying on the bed.)

If you can meditate for half an hour daily you will be able to engage yourself with peace and spiritual strength in the battle of life for one week through the force of this meditation. Such is the beneficial result of meditation. As you have to move with different minds of peculiar natures in your daily life, get the strength and peace from meditation and you will have no trouble and worry.

A yogi who meditates regularly has a magnetic and charming personality. Those who come in contact with him are much influenced by his sweet voice, powerful speech, lustrous eyes, brilliant complexion, strong healthy body, good behaviour, virtuous quality and divine nature. Just as a grain of salt dropped in a basin of water dissolves and becomes distributed throughout the whole water, just as sweet fragrance of jasmine pervades the air, so also the yogi's spiritual aura infiltrates into the minds of others. People draw joy, peace and strength from him. They are inspired by his speech and get elevation of mind by mere contact with him.

Meditation is the only way for attaining immortality and eternal bliss. Those who do not concentrate and meditate are

slayers of Atman. They are in fact living corpses and miserable wretches. They are very poor people. They are hopeless misers indeed.

The wise cut asunder the knot of egoism by the sharp sword of constant meditation. Then dawns supreme knowledge of the Self or full inner illumination or Self-realisation. The liberated sage has neither doubts nor delusion. All the bonds of karma are rent asunder. Therefore, be ever engaged in meditation. This is the master-key for opening the realms of eternal bliss. It may be tiring and disgusting in the beginning, because the mind will be running away from the point every now and then. After some practice it will be focussed in the centre. You will be immersed in divine bliss.

The man who cannot fix his mind in meditation cannot have knowledge of the Self. The unsteady man cannot practise any meditation. He cannot have any intense devotion to knowledge of the Self or any burning longing for liberation or moksha. He who does not practise any meditation cannot possess peace of mind. How can there be happiness for the unpeaceful?

Meditate, meditate. Do not lose even a single minute. Meditation will remove all the miseries of life. That is the only way. Meditation is the enemy of the mind. It brings about the death of the mind.

Like attracts like. This is a great law. Entertain good thoughts. Do meditation. You will attract sadhus, yogis and siddhas. You will be benefited by their vibrations. Your new spiritual vibration will attract them!

Even Indra, who is rolling in abundant wealth, cannot enjoy that bliss which comes to a sage who has a self-centred mind free from desires, who is resting in his own essential nature and who has equal vision for all.

Ignorant people bring a false charge that the sadhus who meditate in caves are selfish, The mahatma who meditates in a solitary cave in the Himalayas helps the world more through his spiritual vibrations than the sadhu who preaches on the platform. When the meditator becomes mindless he pervades and permeates the whole world. Just as sound vibrations travel in the ethereal space, so also the spiritual vibrations of a meditator travel a long distance and bring peace and strength to thousands.

Learn the science of self-control. Possess a steady mind by constant practice of meditation. Fix your mind upon God. You will have divine life. There will be an inflooding of all divine qualities. All negative tendencies will vanish and all conflicting forces will be reconciled. You will enjoy perfect harmony, undisturbed happiness and abiding peace.

Great rishis and sages of yore like Yajnavalkya, Uddalaka, etc., acquired the knowledge of the Self — which is a means to secure the highest communion — through intense meditation.

The attainment of cosmic consciousness is permanent in realised souls. It is like a glimpse in the beginning. Through steady meditation it becomes permanent or natural.

Without the help of meditation you cannot attain knowledge of the Self. Without its aid you cannot grow into the divine state. Without it you cannot liberate yourself from the trammels of the mind, and attain immortality. If you do not practise meditation the supreme splendour and fadeless glories of the Atman will remain hidden from you. Tear the veils that cover the soul by practising regular meditation. By constant meditation rend asunder the five sheaths that screen the Atman, and then attain the final beatitude of life.

4. Meditation and Rest

Fatigue of the senses demands rest. Hence sleep supervenes at night, rhythmically. Motion and rest are rhythmical processes in life. The mind moves about in the avenues of the senses through the force of desires. There is subtle working of the mind in dream also, hence you do not get good rest in sleep. Real rest is secured in meditation, and meditation only. This rest is far superior to the rest that is obtained from sleep. Sound sleep even for half or one hour will suffice for the man who regularly meditates.

The mind is fully concentrated during meditation. It is far away from objects and very near the Atman. There are no currents during meditation owing to absence of objects. Consequently there is the manifestation of solid, lasting, real spiritual bliss with complete and genuine rest. You must practise meditation, you must feel it yourself. Then you will agree with me.

You may not enjoy the rest fully in the beginning of the practice, because at the outset there is a good deal of wrestling between the will and innate nature, the old mental tendencies and the new tendencies, old habits and new habits, effort and old conduct. The mind revolts. When the mind is thinned out, when it has reached the thread-like state, you will enjoy good rest in meditation. You can then gradually cut short your sleep to three or four hours.

Generally, when you have dreamless or deep sound sleep, either you do not remember what you dreamt of, or you fall into absolute unconsciousness which is almost death — a taste of death. But in meditation there is sleep in which you enter into an absolute silence, immortality and peace in all parts of your being, and your consciousness merges into Sat-chit-ananda (existence, knowledge, bliss). You can hardly call it sleep, for there is perfect awareness. In that condition you can remain for

a few minutes. It will give you more rest and refreshment than hours of ordinary sleep. You cannot have it by chance. It requires long training.

5. Mind and Meditation

Mind is a power born of the spirit, because it is through mind that God manifests Himself in the differentiated universe of names and forms. Mind is nothing but a bundle of thoughts and habits. Make use of them as an aid in spiritual endeavour.

There are many terms in the *Bhagavad Gita* which denote that you will have to give your full mind, entire cent-per-cent, to God. Then only will you have Self-realisation. Even if one ray of mind runs outside it is impossible to attain God-consciousness.

If you remove the oscillation of the mind you will get one-pointedness of mind, which is a thing unknown to many. Max Muller writes: “*One-pointedness of mind is impossible for us (westerners) when our minds are diverted in various directions through newspapers, telegrams, postal communications, etc.*” It is an indispensable condition in all religious and philosophical speculations, and in meditation.

In the *Bhagavad Gita* Lord Krishna prescribes a spiritual practice for removing tossing of the mind: “*As often as the wavering and unsteady mind goes forth, so often reining it in, let him bring it under the control of the Self. Abandoning without reserve all desires born of the imagination by the mind, curbing in the aggregate of the senses on every side, little by little let him gain tranquillity by means of reason controlled by steadiness; having made the mind abide in the Self, let him not think of anything.*” (VI-24,25,26)

When you begin to sweep a room that was kept closed for six months, various kinds of dirt come out from the corners of the room. Similarly during meditation, under pressure of yoga

and through the grace of God, various kinds of impurities float about on the surface of the mind. Bravely remove them, one by one, by suitable methods and counter-virtues, with patience and strenuous efforts. The old vicious habitual desires take revenge when you try to suppress them. Do not be afraid, they lose their strength after some time. You have to tame the mind just as you tame a wild elephant or a tiger. Do not indulge in vicious thoughts which serve as food for the mind. Make the mind self-introspective. Substitute good, virtuous, sublime thoughts. Feed the mind with ennobling aspirations and ideas. Old vicious tendencies will be gradually thinned out and eventually obliterated.

You must try your level best to keep a serene mind always. Meditation can proceed from a serene mind only. A serene mind is a valuable spiritual asset for you.

There are many valuable trainings of the mind which are essential to mental culture: for instance, the training of the memory, the cultivation of reflection, discrimination and enquiry. The practice of meditation itself is a potent clarifier of the memory. The practice of memory-culture powerfully helps the attainment of meditation.

Do not wrestle with the mind during meditation. It is a serious mistake. Many neophytes commit this grave error. That is the reason why they soon get easily tired. They get headache and have to get up very often to pass urine during the course of meditation, owing to the irritation set up in the micturition centre in the spinal cord.

Do not try to drive away the unimportant and irrelevant thoughts. The more you try the more will they return and the more strength will they gain. You will only tax your energy and will. Become indifferent. Fill the mind with divine thoughts. The others will gradually vanish. Build through regular meditation a strong spiritual fortress and a magnetic aura around you which cannot be penetrated even by the the worst evil.

Your will should be rendered strong, pure and irresistible by more reflection on the Self, eradication of subtle desires, control of the senses and more inner life.

In dream also you should begin to gradually exercise control. You should check the mind when it does an evil act. The force of your spiritual practice done in the wakeful state will come to your aid in the dream. This is a sign of your spiritual growth. Watch your dreams carefully.

What sort of thoughts arise in your mind as soon as you wake up, when you are alone in the room or when you walk in the streets? Are you able to keep up the same state of mind you have during meditation in a closed room when you walk in the street also? Introspect and closely watch your mind. If the mind is perturbed when you walk in the streets you are still weak, you have not advanced in meditation or grown spiritually. Continue the meditation vigorously. (An advanced student will have thoughts of Brahman in his dream.)

Unless you closely observe the mind you will not find that it is running away. Sometimes you will be imagining that you are meditating, but actually the mind will be either building castles in the air or going into the state of half sleep or deep sleep.

In a big city there is much bustle and sound at eight p.m. At nine p.m. there is not so much bustle and sound. At ten p.m. it is still reduced; at eleven p.m. it is much less. At one a.m. there is peace everywhere. Even so, in the beginning of yoga practices there are countless thoughts in the mind. There is much agitation and tossing in the mind. Gradually the thought waves subside. In the end all mental modifications are controlled. The yogi enjoys perfect peace.

When you pass through a market of a big city you will not be able to notice small sounds, but when you sit for common meditation with some of your friends in a quiet room in the

morning, you will be able to detect even a little sneezing or coughing. Even so, you are not able to find out the evil thoughts when you are engaged in some work or other, but you are able to detect them when you sit for meditation. Do not be afraid when evil thoughts pass through your mind when you sit for meditation. Do vigorous japa and meditation. They will pass off soon.

Even if the mind runs outside during your practice, do not bother. Allow it to run. Slowly try to bring it to your centre of concentration. By repeated practice the mind will be finally focussed in your heart; in the Atman, the indweller of your heart, the final goal of life. In the beginning the mind may run out eighty times; within six months it may run seventy times; within a year it may run fifty times; within two years it may run thirty times; within five years it will be completely fixed in the divine consciousness. Then it will not run out at all even if you try your level best to bring it out, like the wandering bull which was in the habit of running to gardens of different landlords for eating grass, but which now eats fresh gram and extract of cotton seeds in its own resting place.

The Atman is the fountain source of energy. Thinking on the Atman or the source of energy is also a dynamic method for augmenting energy, strength and power.

Conserve energy by talking little, observing mauna, controlling anger, observing celibacy, practising pranayama and controlling irrelevant and nonsensical thoughts. You will have abundant energy at your disposal by having recourse to the above practices. You can move heaven and earth now.

Abandon ruthlessly all sensual objects. They are the wombs of pain. Gradually develop balance of mind. Subdue the senses. Annihilate lust, anger and greed. Meditate and behold

the imperishable Atman. Rest yourself firmly in the Self. Nothing can hurt you now, you have become invincible.

Dive deep into the heart by withdrawing the mind from sensual objects. Kill this illusory little 'I' and know 'I am He' (soham). Just as the drop of water loses its name and form and joins the sea, so also the jiva himself merges in the Supreme Soul and loses his own name and form.

The sight of a beautiful form gives pleasure to the mind. After all, mind wants pleasure. If, by the practice of meditation, the mind is trained to enjoy or taste the bliss of formless Brahman or the Self who is seated in the hearts of all, it will not run to beautiful forms outside.

The mind-wandering will gradually cease through regular meditation. Meditation will remove irritability also and considerably augment peace of mind.

You should know the ways and habits of the mind through daily introspection, self-analysis or self-examination. You should have knowledge of the laws of the mind. Then it will be easy for you to check mind-wandering. When you sit for meditation, when you deliberately attempt to forget the worldly objects, all sorts of worldly thoughts, irrelevant and nonsensical thoughts will crop up in your mind and disturb your meditation. You will be quite astonished. Old thoughts which you entertained several years ago, old memories of past enjoyments, will bubble up and force the mind to wander in all directions. You will find that the trap-door of the vast magazine of thoughts and memories within the subconscious mind is opened, the lid of the store-house of thoughts within is lifted up and the thoughts gush out in a continuous stream. The more you attempt to still them the more they will bubble up with redoubled force and strength.

Be not discouraged. Never despair. Through regular and constant meditation you can purify the subconscious mind and

control all thoughts and memories. The fire of meditation will burn all thoughts. Meditation is a potent antidote to annihilate poisonous worldly thoughts. Be assured of this.

During introspection you can clearly observe the shiftings of the mind from one line of thought to another. Herein lies a chance for you to mould the mind properly and direct the thoughts and the mental energy into divine channels. You can rearrange the thoughts and make new associations on a new pure basis. You can throw out useless worldly thoughts just as you remove the weeds and throw them out. Just as you grow jasmine, roses, lilies and temple flowers in your garden, you should cultivate the flowers of peaceful thoughts of love, mercy, kindness, purity, etc. in the vast garden of your mind. Through introspection you will have to water this garden of the mind with meditation and sublime thinking and remove the weeds of vain, useless discordant thoughts.

A goldsmith converts thirteen carat gold into pure fifteen carat gold by adding acids and burning it several times in the crucible. Even so will you have to purify your sensuous mind through concentration, reflection on the words of the spiritual preceptor and the sentences of the Upanishads, japa or silent repetition of the name of the Lord, and meditation.

This is very patient work. This is a stupendous task indeed, but for a yogi of self-determination who has the grace of the Lord and iron will, it is nothing. The practice must be constant. Then only can one attain Self-realisation surely and quickly. He who practises meditation by fits and starts for a few minutes daily will not be able to achieve any tangible results in yoga.

Meditation on the immortal Self will act like dynamite and blow up all thoughts and memories in the subconscious mind. If the thoughts trouble you much, do not suppress them by force. Be a silent witness. They will subside gradually. Then try to root them out through regular silent meditation.

Positive overpowers negative. A positive thought drives off a negative one. Courage drives off fear, love destroys hatred,

unity annihilates separateness, magnanimity destroys petty-mindedness (jealousy) and generosity drives away miserliness and greed. Keep yourself always positive and you will have wonderful meditation. When you see the flowers in a mango tree you know pretty well that you will get the mangoes soon. Even so, if you have peace in your mind, be sure that you will get good meditation and the fruit of illumination soon.

All objects seen are nothing but mind only, in form and substance. Mind creates and it destroys. A highly developed mind influences lower minds. Telepathy, mind reading, hypnotism, mesmerism, distant healing and so many allied powers bear testimony to this fact. Mind is undoubtedly the greatest power on earth, and control of that mind bestows all powers.

For meditation you want a properly trained instrument (mind). It should be calm, clear, pure, subtle, sharp, steady and one-pointed. Brahman is pure and subtle and you need a pure and subtle mind to approach Brahman.

The pose or asana is really mental. If the mind is wandering you cannot have a steady body or a steady physical pose. When the mind is steady or fixed in Brahman, steadiness of the body automatically follows.

All actions, whether internal or external, can be done only when the mind is united with the organs. Thought is the real action. If you have control over the mind by steady practice, if you can regulate your emotions and moods, you will not do foolish and wrong actions. Meditation will help a lot in checking various emotions and impulses.

As the first thought is the thought 'I', and as this thought 'I' is at the base of all other thoughts, egoism is the seed for the mind. Mind exists on account of 'I'. 'I' exists on account of mind. 'I' is only an idea in the mind. 'Mind' and 'I' are identical. If 'I' vanishes mind will also vanish, and if mind vanishes 'I' will

vanish. Destroy mind through knowledge of Brahman. Destroy the 'I' through the feeling of 'I am Brahman', through constant and intense meditation. When mind vanishes or thoughts cease, name and form will cease to exist and the goal is reached.

The aspirant is very enthusiastic in his sadhana in the beginning. He is full of zeal. He takes a great deal of interest. He expects to get some results or siddhis. When he does not get these results he gets discouraged, loses interest in his practice and slackens his efforts or gives up his sadhana completely. He loses his faith in the efficacy of the sadhana. Sometimes the mind gets disgusted with one particular kind of sadhana and it wants some new kind of sadhana. Just as mind wants some variety in food and other things, so also it wants variety in the mode of sadhana also. It rebels against monotonous practice. The aspirant should know how to coax the mind on such occasions and to extract work from it by a little relaxation of mind. The cessation of sadhana is a grave mistake. Spiritual practices should never be given up under any circumstances. Evil thoughts will be ever waiting to enter the gates of the mental factory. If the aspirant stops his sadhana his mind will be like the devil's workshop. Do not expect anything. Be sincere and regular in your daily routine, tapas and meditation. The sadhana will take care of itself.

The mind is directly or indirectly attached to some pleasing or favourite ideas. If you are enjoying the picturesque scenery in Kashmir your mind will be suddenly upset by shock if you receive a telegram which brings the unhappy tidings of the untimely demise of your only son. The scenery will no longer interest you, it will have lost its charm for you. There is rejection of attention, there is depression. It is concentration and attention that gives you pleasure in sight-seeing.

When you climb the ladder of yoga and when you walk in the spiritual path, do not look back, do not remember your past experiences; kill all memory of your past experiences. Build

up your mental feeling of 'I am Brahman' strongly. Strengthen it. Generate again and again the thought that Brahman alone exists. Keep it steady by regular and constant meditation. A single thought of your past experience will give a new lease of life to that thought-image or memory picture, rejuvenate and strengthen it and pull you down. It will be difficult for you to climb up again.

Be concerned with the present only. Do not look back upon the past, or to the future. Then alone will you be happy, free from cares, worries and anxieties. You will have a long life. Your past days of childhood and schooling are all a dream when you are forty. The whole of life is a long dream. The past is a dream to you now. The future also will be the same hereafter. You will have to deal with the present only. You will have to cut down the two wings of the mind-bird, the two wings representing the past and the future. But it will flutter about, as there is the present. Keep away all external impressions. Silence the mind. Restrain the modifications of the mind. Concentrate. Overcome the multiplicity of ideas that result from impressions. Destroy the sankalpas through strenuous efforts. Exercise enquiry and discrimination. Meditate ceaselessly upon that satchidananda Brahman and attain that supreme immaculate seat.

Give now good food for the mind — some sublime thoughts of the Bhagavad Gita, Avadhuta Gita, or the meaning of OM — to reflect upon. After some time the luring present also will vanish. The mind will become perfectly serene and tranquil. The highest knowledge of the Self will dawn in your pure mind. You will rest in Brahman, the source, support, basis and background of everything. You will be established in the knowledge of the Self (sat-chit-ananda). May you prosper gloriously! May you live drowned in Brahman, the ocean of bliss, in an illumined state!

O beloved Ram, you are within a strong spiritual fortress now. No temptation can influence you. You are absolutely safe. You can do vigorous sadhana now without fear. You have a strong

spiritual prop to lean upon. Become a brave soldier. Kill your foe, the mind, ruthlessly. Wear the spiritual laurels of peace, equal vision, contentment. Your face is already shining with Brahmic bliss. The all-merciful Lord has given you all sorts of comforts, good health and a guru to guide you. What more do you want? Grow, evolve, realise the Truth and proclaim it everywhere.

6. Qualifications for Practising Meditation

Before saturating the mind with thoughts of Brahman you will have to assimilate the divine ideas first. Assimilation first and then saturation. Then comes realisation at once, without a moment's delay. Remember this triplet always — assimilation, saturation, realisation.

Your will should be rendered strong, pure and irresistible by more remembrance of God, eradication of desires, control of the senses and more intense inner life. You must utilise every second on Sundays and holidays to your best spiritual advantage.

If you have tasted rasagulla (a Bengal sweetmeat) for a month, mental adhesion to rasagulla comes in the mind. If you are in the company of sannyasins (monks), if you read books on yoga, vedanta, etc., a similar mental adhesion takes place in the mind for attaining God-consciousness. Mere mental adhesion, though, will not help you much. Burning dispassion (vairagya), a burning desire for liberation (mumukshutva), capacity for spiritual practice, intense and constant application and deep meditation are needed. Then only Self-knowledge is possible.

Energy is wasted in useless thinking. Conserve mental energy by driving out useless, obnoxious thoughts. Then you will improve in your meditation.

Just as water when it leaks into rat-holes instead of running into the proper channels in agricultural fields, becomes wasted and does not help the growth of plants, fruit-bearing

trees, grains, etc., so also the efforts of an aspirant in meditation become a wastage if he has not the virtue of dispassion. He gets no progress in meditation.

Semen or vital force tones the nerves and brain and energises the system. He who has preserved his vital force by the vow of celibacy and sublimated it into ojas shakti (spiritual energy) can practise steady meditation for a long period. Only he can ascend the ladder of yoga. Without brahmacharya no iota of spiritual progress is possible. Brahmacharya is the very foundation on which the superstructure of meditation and samadhi can be built up. Many people waste this vital energy — a great spiritual treasure indeed — when they become blind and lose their power of reason under excitement. Pitiably indeed is their lot! They cannot make any substantial progress in yoga.

You will be able to enter into deep meditation only if you lead a moral life. When you have led a moral life you may try further to build up discrimination and the other steps in your mind. You can cultivate mind in concentration and can finally devote yourself to meditation. The more you lead the moral life, the more you meditate, the greater likelihood will there be for you to enter into nirvikalpa samadhi, which alone can liberate you from the round of births and deaths and confer on you eternal bliss and immortality.

Leading a virtuous life is not by itself sufficient for God-realisation. Constant meditation is absolutely necessary. A good virtuous life only prepares the mind as a fit instrument for concentration and meditation. It is concentration and meditation that eventually lead to Self-realisation.

The student of yoga should not possess wealth as it will drag him to worldly temptations. He can keep a little sum to meet the wants of the body. Economical independence will relieve the mind from anxieties and will enable him to continue the sadhana without interruption.

You must have a pure mind if you want to realize the Self. Unless the mind is set free and casts away all desires, cravings, worries, delusion, pride, lust, attachment, likes, and dislikes, it cannot enter into the domain of supreme peace and unalloyed felicity — the immortal abode.

You cannot enjoy peace of mind or practice meditation if there is tossing of the mind. Desires and tossing of the mind co-exist. If you really want to destroy the latter you must destroy all mundane desires and cravings through dispassion and self-surrender to the Lord.

If you apply fire to green wood it will not burn; if you apply fire to a piece of dried wood it will at once catch fire and burn. Even so, those who have not purified their minds will not be able to start the fire of meditation. They will be sleeping or dreaming — building castles in the air — when they sit for meditation. But those who have removed the impurities of their minds by japa, service, charity, pranayama, etc., will enter into deep meditation as soon as they sit for meditation. The pure ripe mind will at once burn with the fire of meditation.

Mind is compared to a garden. Just as you can cultivate good flowers and fruits in a garden by ploughing and manuring the land, by removing the weeds and thorns and by watering the plants and trees, so also you can cultivate the flower of devotion in the garden of your mind by removing the impurities of the mind (such as lust, anger, greed, delusion, pride, etc.) and watering it with divine thoughts. Weeds and thorns grow in the rainy season and disappear in summer, but their seeds remain underneath the ground. As soon as there is a shower the seeds again germinate and sprout. Even so, the modifications of the mind manifest on the surface of the conscious mind, then disappear and assume a subtle seed-state in the form of samskaras or impressions. The samskaras again come to the surface of the mind either through internal or external stimuli.

When the garden is clean, when there are no weeds and thorns, you can get good fruits. So also, when the mind is pure, when it is free from lust, anger, etc. you can have the fruit of good deep meditation. Therefore cleanse the mind of its impurities first. Then the current of meditation will flow by itself.

If you want to keep a garden always clean, you will have to remove not only the weeds and thorns and other small plants, but also the seeds that lie underneath the ground, which again and again germinate during the rainy season. Even so, you will have to destroy not only the big waves or modifications of the mind but also the impressions or tendencies which are the seeds for births and deaths and which generate the thoughts again and again, if you want to enter into samadhi and attain liberation or perfect freedom.

The aspirant who wants to attain samadhi should have patience like that of the bird Tittibha, which tried to empty the ocean with its beak. Once he makes a firm resolve, gods will come to his help in the same way that Garuda came to the help of Tittibha. Help invariably comes from all beings in a righteous act. Even the monkeys and squirrels helped Rama to rescue Sita. He who is endowed with self-control, courage, prowess, fortitude, patience, perseverance, strength and skill can achieve anything. You should never give up your attempt even if you face insurmountable difficulties.

7. Requisites

The following are indispensable if you want to practise vigorous meditation and attain samadhi or Self-realisation quickly.

- (a) There must be mauna and solitude in a cool place.
- (b) There must be capacity for spiritual practice.
- (c) There must be good, pure, substantial, light, nutritious food,
- (d) There must be a good spiritual teacher to guide you.
- (e) There must be good books for study.
- (f) There must be burning dispassion, longing for liberation

and strong discrimination in you.

(g) You must have a sharp, subtle, calm and one-pointed intellect to understand the reality of Brahman. Then, and then only, is realisation possible.

Many do not get the above favourable conditions for spiritual practice. That is the reason why they do not make any spiritual progress. For purposes of meditation everything is to be rendered pure (sattvic). The place of meditation must be pure, the food must be pure, the wearing apparel must be pure, the company must be pure, talking must be pure, the sounds that you hear must be pure, thinking must be pure, study must be pure. Then only is good progress possible, particularly in the case of beginners (neophytes).

This body is an instrument for attaining God-realisation. God-realisation is not possible without spiritual practice. Spiritual practice is not possible without good health. A sickly, dilapidated body stands in the way of practise of discipline. If you do not possess good health you cannot do any rigorous yoga practice and meditation.

Just as clouds screen and obstruct the sun, so also the cloud of sickness stands in your way. Even then you must not leave the practice of japa, concentration and meditation. These small clouds of sickness will pass off soon. Give the suggestion to the mind: 'Even this will pass away'. Just as you do not leave your food even for a day, so also you should not leave your spiritual practice even for a day. The mind is ever ready to deceive you and stop you from the practice of meditation. Do not hear the voice of the mind. Hear the sweet voice of the soul.

The aspirant should try his level best to always keep good health by regular exercise, asana, pranayama, walking and running in open air; moderation in diet; regularity in his work, meals, sleep, etc. He should avoid drugs as much as possible. He must take recourse to nature-cure such as fresh air, wholesome food, cold bath and dietetic adjustment. He should always keep a

cheerful attitude of mind under all conditions of life. Cheerfulness is a powerful mental tonic. There is intimate connection between body and mind. If one is cheerful the body is also healthy. That is the reason why doctors now prescribe laughing three times daily in the treatment of diseases.

Some foolish aspirants refuse to take medicine when they are ailing seriously. They say; “It is our fate. We should not go against fate. Taking medicine is against the will of God. The body is illusory. It is insentient. If I take medicine, it will increase the body-idea.” This is foolish philosophy. Take medicine. Try hard. Leave the results to karma. This is wisdom. These foolish people unnecessarily torture the body, allow the disease to strike deep root and spoil their health. They cannot do any sadhana. They ruin this instrument by a wrong conception of vedanta. Vedanta says: “Have no attachment for this body, but keep it clean, strong and healthy for constant, rigid sadhana. The body is a boat to cross to the other shore of immortality. It is a horse to take you to the destination. Feed the horse well — but give up ‘mine-ness’.” Tell me friend, which is better? To take a purgative, to take some medicine for a couple of days, to tide over difficulties in a few days and to again start sadhana quickly, or to neglect the disease, not to take any medicine, to allow the disease to assume a grave form, to suffer for a month or two by negligence, to make the disease chronic and incurable and to allow the practice to suffer for a month?

8. HINTS ON MEDITATION

When you are a neophyte in meditation, start repeating some sublime hymns for ten minutes as soon as you sit for meditation. This will elevate the mind. The mind can be easily withdrawn from worldly objects. Then stop this kind of thinking also and fix the mind on one idea only, by repeated and strenuous efforts. Then meditation will ensue.

You must have a mental image of God or Brahman (concrete or abstract) before you begin to meditate.

When you start a fire you heap up some straw, pieces of paper and thin pieces of wood. The fire gets extinguished. You blow it again several times through the mouth or the blow-pipe. After some time it becomes a small conflagration. You can hardly extinguish it now even with great effort. Even so, in the beginning of meditation beginners fall down from meditation into their old grooves. They will have to lift their mind up again and again and fix it on the object of meditation. When meditation becomes very deep and steady they eventually get established in God. Then meditation becomes natural and habitual. Use the blow-pipe of intense dispassion and intense practice to kindle the fire of meditation.

Just as the student creates interest in his study of mathematics or geometry (although it is disgusting in the beginning) by imagining the advantages that he will gain by passing the examination, so also you will have to create interest in meditation by thinking of the incalculable benefits of immortality, supreme peace and infinite bliss that will be derived by its constant practice.

Clarify your ideas again and again. Think clearly. Have deep concentration and right thinking. Introspect in solitude. Purify your thoughts to a considerable degree. Still the thoughts and silence the bubbling mind. Just as in a surgical clinic the assistant surgeon allows only one patient at a time to enter the

consultation room or the operation theatre, so also you will have to allow one thought-wave only to rise in the mind and to settle down calmly. Then allow another thought to enter. Drive off all extraneous thoughts that have nothing to do with the subject matter on hand. An efficient control over thoughts through long practice is a great help in meditation.

Watch every thought very carefully. Shut out all useless thoughts from the mind. Your life must tally with your meditation. Keep up your meditation during work also. Do not give new strength to evil thoughts by constant thinking of them. Restrain them. Substitute sublime thoughts. Control of thought is absolutely necessary. You should not waste even a single thought.

Do not store needless information in your brain. Learn to unmind the mind. Forget whatever you have learnt, it is useless to you now. Then only can you fill your mind with divine thoughts in meditation. You will gain fresh mental strength now.

Mind your own daily business. The fruit will come by itself. Let me repeat here the words of Lord Krishna in the *Bhagavad Gita*: “*Your business is with the action (austerity, practice and meditation) only, never with its fruits; so let not the fruits of action be your motive, nor be attached to inaction.*” Your efforts will be crowned with sanguine success by the Lord. It takes a long time for purification of the mind and getting a one-pointed mind. Be cool and patient. Continue your sadhana regularly.

Be careful in the selection of your companions. Undesirable persons easily shake your faith and belief. Have full faith in your spiritual preceptor and the spiritual practice which you are pursuing. Never allow your own convictions to be changed. Continue with zeal and enthusiasm. You will have quick spiritual progress and you will ascend the spiritual ladder step by step and ultimately reach the goal.

Do not plan, do not imagine, do not try to fulfil desires. Be indifferent. Annihilate emotion. Do not be attached to desires.

Desires are powerless in the absence of emotions and attachment. They dwindle and die. Find out the causes of disturbing thoughts and remove them one by one. Watch the mind carefully. Dwell in solitude, do not mix. Have patience, enthusiasm and courage. If you find great interest and happiness in meditation and if you are progressing, stop study also for some time. Study also is an object of enjoyment. God is not in books. He can be reached only by constant meditation. Erudition is to gain applause in society. Avoid pedantry.

Sometimes the mind feels tired. Then take complete rest. Do not strain the mind. Go for an evening stroll along the sea-shore, along the banks of Ganges or any other delightful road. Chant OM. Feel OM. Hum OM. Reduce the period of meditation for a couple of days. Use your strong common-sense and listen to the voice from within. Observe the moods of the mind. The two currents of joy and grief are moving in the mind. When you are depressed, go for a good walk. Close the books. Remember that these are all characteristics of superimposition and they do not belong to the thing itself — the Atman. They will pass away quickly.

When you meditate, disregard the substratum awakenings in the mind that arise out of the senses. Avoid carefully the comparisons with all other cross-references and memories of ideas. Concentrate the whole energy of the mind on the one idea of God or Atman Itself without comparison with any other idea. Whenever the mind wanders you should check it. Try to identify yourself with the eternal, immortal, ever-pure Atman that resides in the chambers of your heart. Think and feel always: “I am the ever-pure Atman.” This one thought will remove all troubles and fanciful thoughts. The mind wants to delude you. Start this anticurrent of thought. The mind will lurk like a thief.

You can get the meditative mood quite easily without effort if you do your practice at fixed hours, both morning and

night. In winter you can have four sittings. You should have the same pose, the same room, the same seat, the same mental attitude and the same hours for meditation. Everybody should have his daily routine and should strictly adhere to it at all costs. Leniency to the mind will upset the whole programme. You should meditate regularly and do spiritual practice untiringly with indefatigable energy, dogged patience, adamant will and iron determination. Then only sure success is possible.

Meals should be taken at regular hours. One should go to sleep at a fixed time and get up at a fixed time. See how the sun is very regular in its rising and daily work!

A glutton or a sensualist, a dullard or a lazy man cannot practise meditation. He who has controlled the tongue and other organs, who has acumen, who eats, drinks and sleeps in moderation, who has destroyed selfishness, lust, greed and anger, can practise meditation and attain success in samadhi.

What does a passionate man do? He repeats the same old ignominious act again and again and fills his stomach as many times as he can. What does an aspirant with burning desire for Self-realisation do? He takes a little milk and repeats the process of meditation again and again the whole day and night and enjoys the eternal bliss of the Self. Both are busy in their own way. The former is caught up in the wheel of births and deaths and the latter attains immortality.

Just as you require food for the body, so also you require food for the soul in the shape of prayers, japa, kirtan, meditation, etc. Just as you are agitated when you do not get food in time, so also will you be agitated when you do not pray in the morning and evening at the proper time if you keep up the practice of prayer and japa for some time. The soul also wants its food at the proper time. The food for the soul is more essential than the food for the body.

Whatever spiritual practice you do — either japa, practice of asana, concrete meditation on a form of the Lord or pranayama

— do it systematically and regularly every day. The reward is immense.

Just as you take food four times — morning, noon, afternoon and night — so also you will have to meditate four times a day if you want to realise quickly.

If interruption comes in your practice, make up the deficiency in the evening or at night or on the following morning. Rapid progress and great success can be attained if regularity is observed by the practitioner. Even if you do not realise any tangible result in the practice you must plod on with sincerity, earnestness, patience and perseverance. You will get success after some time. There is no doubt of this.

Fill the mind again and again with pure, divine thoughts. New grooves and avenues will be formed now. Just as a gramophone needle cuts a small groove in the plate, pure thinking will cut new healthy grooves in the mind and brain. New impressions will be formed.

The period of meditation should be gradually increased with caution. The meditation should not be by fits and starts. It should be well-regulated and steady. You must always use your commonsense and reason all throughout your practice. You should ascend the summit of yoga gradually, slowly, stage by stage, step by step. You must not give up the practice even for a few days.

Just as you saturate salt or sugar with the water, you will have to saturate the mind with thoughts of God, with sublime soul-awakening spiritual thoughts. Then only will you be always established in the divine consciousness.

If you keep lemon juice or tamarind juice in a golden cup it is not spoiled or tainted, but if you keep it in a brass or copper vessel it is at once spoiled and rendered poisonous. Even so if there are some sensual thoughts in the pure mind of a person

who practises constant meditation they will not pollute the mind and induce passionate excitement, but if there are sensual thoughts in persons with impure minds these sensual thoughts will cause excitement in them when they come across sensual objects.

Just as you render turbid water pure by the addition of clearing nut (*strychnos potatorum*), so also will you have to purify the turbid mind filled with desires and false ideas, by thinking and reflecting on the Absolute. Then only will there be true illumination.

You must not be too hasty in longing for the fruits at once when you take to meditation. A young lady perambulated the asvattha tree (*ficus religiosa*) one hundred and eight times for getting a baby, and then immediately touched her abdomen to see whether there was a child or not. It is simply foolishness. She will have to wait for some months. Even so, if you will meditate for some time regularly, then the mind will be ripened and eventually you will get Self-realisation. Haste makes waste.

During meditation, note how long you can shut out all worldly thoughts. Watch your mind. If it is for twenty minutes, try to increase the period to thirty minutes, and so on. Fill the mind with thoughts of God again and again.

In meditation do not strain your eyes. Do not strain the brain. Do not struggle or wrestle with the mind. Relax. Gently allow divine thoughts to flow. Steadily think of the object of meditation. Do not voluntarily and violently drive away intruding thoughts. Have sublime pure thoughts. The vicious thoughts will vanish by themselves.

If there is much strain in your meditation, reduce the duration of each sitting for a few days. Do light meditation only. When you have regained the normal tone, again increase the period. Use your common sense throughout your sadhana. I again reiterate this point.

When you go in for seclusion for intense tapas or when you practice intense meditation in a quiet room, do not bother much about your shaving. Let the hairs grow. These mechanical thoughts such as thoughts of shaving, etc., will produce great distraction in your mind, and interfere with the continuity of divine thoughts. Do not think much of the body, bread, clothing, etc. Think more of God or Atman.

If you are a very busy man and if you always lead a travelling life, you need not have a special room and a special time for meditation. Do japa of 'soham' and meditation along with the breath — this is very easy — or associate your mantra also with the breath. Then every movement of breath will become a prayer and meditation. Remember God and feel His presence everywhere. This will suffice.

Why do you close your eyes during meditation? Open your eyes and meditate. You must keep your balance of mind even when you are in the bustle of a city. Then only are you perfect. In the beginning when you are a neophyte you can close your eyes to remove the distraction of mind, as you are very weak. But later on you must meditate with eyes open even during walking. Think strongly that the world is unreal, that there is no world, that there is the Atman only. If you can meditate on the Atman even when the eyes are open, you will be a strong man, you will not be easily disturbed.

You can meditate only when the mind is beyond all anxieties.

All vrittis (mental modifications) such as anger, jealousy, hatred, etc., assume subtle forms when you practise japa and meditation and they are thinned out. They should be completely destroyed through samadhi. Then only are you safe. Latent vrittis will be waiting for opportunities to assume a grave and expanded form. You should be ever careful and vigilant.

Resist the fatal downward pull by the dark, antagonistic forces through regular meditation. Check the aimless wanderings of the mind through clear and orderly thinking. Hear not the false whispers of the lower mind. Turn your inner gaze to the divine centre. Do not be afraid of the severe set-backs that you will encounter on your journey. Be brave. March on boldly till you finally rest in your centre of eternal bliss.

You must daily increase your dispassion, meditation and sattvic virtues such as patience, perseverance, mercy, love, forgiveness, purity, etc. These help meditation. Meditation increases the pure qualities.

Have the one all-pervading feeling of God. Try to keep up the feeling always. Deny the finite body as a mere appearance.

When you put a piece of iron rod in the blazing furnace it becomes red like fire. When you remove it, it loses its red colour. If you want to keep it always red you must always keep it in fire. So also if you want to keep the mind charged with the fire of wisdom you must keep it always in contact or in touch with God through constant and intense meditation. You must keep up an unceasing flow of God-consciousness.

Just as cannabis, indigo, opium or alcohol give you intoxication which lasts for some hours even if you take a small quantity, so also the God-intoxication that you get from regular meditation lasts for some hours if you meditate for half an hour daily. Therefore, be regular in your meditation.

Those who meditate for four or five hours at a stretch can have two meditative poses. Sometimes blood accumulates in some part of the legs or thighs and so gives a little trouble. After two hours change the pose, or stretch the legs at full length and lean against a wall or pillow. Keep the spine erect. This is the most comfortable asana. Or you can join two chairs, sit in one chair and stretch the legs on another chair. This is another contrivance.

Some students like to meditate with open eyes, others with closed eyes, while some others with half-opened eyes. If you meditate with closed eyes, dust or foreign particles will not fall in your eyes. Some students who are troubled by lights and jerks prefer meditation with open eyes. Within a short time sleep overpowers some who meditate with closed eyes. If the eyes are kept open the mind wanders to objects. Use your commonsense and adopt that which suits you best. Overcome other obstacles by suitable intelligent methods.

Meditation is possible when the mind is full of peace. The stomach should not be loaded. There is an intimate connection between the mind and the food. A heavy meal is harmful. Take a full meal at eleven a.m. and half a seer of milk at night. The evening meal should be light for those who meditate.

Meditate for two or three hours. If you get tired, take rest for half an hour. Take a cup of milk and then again sit for meditation. Repeat the process of meditation again and again. You can have a stroll on the verandah in the evening. Do not allow the mind to entertain any worldly thought even for a few minutes. This method will keep the mind very very busy and entrap it within a short period. Practise this. You can enter into samadhi within forty days. Householders can convert a room into a forest and can achieve this end at their very threshold. You will be able to sit continuously even for fourteen hours at a stretch after some practice. Padmasana is good for householders. Siddhasana is good for sannyasins.

If you wish to attain success in yoga you will have to abandon all worldly enjoyments and practise austerity and celibacy. These will help you in the attainment of concentration and samadhi.

If you are not able to form the image of your chosen deity or fix the mind on it you may try to hear the sound of the mantra repeated by you or think of the letters of the mantra in order. This will stop mind-wandering.

Prana is the overcoat for the mind. The vibration of the subtle psychic prana gives rise to the formation of thought. By pranayama you can improve your meditation by making the mind more steady.

If you place a big mirror in front of a dog and keep some bread in front of it, the dog at once barks at its own reflection in the mirror. It foolishly imagines that there is another dog. Even so, through his mind-mirror man sees his own reflection only in all people, but foolishly imagines, like the dog, that they are all different from him, and he fights on account of hatred and jealousy.

It is the actions of the mind that are truly termed karmas. True liberation results from the disenthronement of the mind. Those who have freed themselves from the fluctuations of their minds have supreme steadfastness in meditation. Should the mind be purged of all its impurities, then it will become very calm and all worldly delusion with its attendant births and deaths will be soon destroyed.

Meditate on the idea: 'There is no world. There is neither body nor the mind. There is only one pure Consciousness. I am that pure Consciousness.' This is nirguna meditation (meditation without attributes).

You will have to make the thought of God or the divine presence flow like an inundation or flood. Renounce the thoughts of objects. Drive them away with the whip of discrimination and enquiry into the nature of the Self. There is struggle in the beginning, it is trying indeed, but later on as you grow stronger and stronger and as you grow in purity and contemplation of God, spiritual practice becomes easy. You rejoice in the life of unity and get strength from the Atman. Inner strength grows when all the sensual ideas are thinned out and the mind becomes one-pointed.

Try to identify yourself with the eternal, immortal, ever-pure Atman that resides in the chambers of your heart. Think and feel always: 'I am the ever pure Atman'. This one thought will remove all troubles and fanciful thoughts.

Places for Meditation

"One should perform his yogic meditation and concentration on a level place, free from pebbles, fire, wind, dust, dampness and disturbing noises, where the scenery is charming and pleasing to the eyes and where there are bowers, caves and good water-places which help the practice of concentration," Svetashvatara Upanishad (II-10)

Solitude and intense meditation are two important requisites for Self-realisation. The banks of rivers, mountain scenery, lovely flower gardens and sacred temples are the places which elevate the mind in concentration and meditation. Have recourse to them.

The world will not suit you for meditation when you advance in the spiritual path. There are many disturbing causes. The environment is not elevating. Your friends are your worst enemies as they take away all your time through vain talk. It is inevitable. You are puzzled and worried, and then you try to get out of that environment.

The place you choose must have a temperate climate and must suit you during summer, rainy season and winter. You must stick to one place for three years with firm determination. As all places combine some advantages and disadvantages, you will have to select that place which has more advantages and less disadvantages.

Everything is relative in this world. Even if you wander from pole to pole you can hardly get an ideal place that can satisfy you from all view-points. You will have to create your own spiritual atmosphere through japa, meditation and prayer.

To get an ideal place is an impossibility. You must not shift when you get some inconvenience. You must put up with it. There is no benefit in frequent wanderings. Do not compare one place with another. The world tempts you in various ways. Use your discrimination and reason. Mussoorie will appear to you most charming when you are at Simla, Simla will appear more delightful when you are at Mussoorie. Do not believe the mind and senses any more. Enough, enough of their tricks. Be on the watch to guard yourself from sense deceptions and temptations.

Rishikesh and Muni-Ki-Reti are wonderful places for meditation. Their charm and spiritual influence are simply marvellous. You can put up your cottage there. Uttarkashi, Brahmapuri, Garuda Chetty and Nilakanth near Rishikesh are other nice places. Almora and Nainital are also good. Any village on the bank of a river, e.g., the Ganges, Narmada or Jamuna, is beautiful. Kulu Valley, Champa Valley and Kashmir are quite suitable.

Select any place that has an even climate. Cool places are needed for meditation. The brain gets tired very soon in a hot place. In a cool place you can meditate all the twentyfour hours. You will not feel exhaustion. Winter and the early part of spring are the best seasons for beginners to commence meditation. In winter the mind is not tired at all. You can meditate for even twentyfour hours without the least exhaustion.

Important Places for Meditation

1. Rishikesh (Himalayas)
2. Hardwar
3. Uttarkasi (via Tehri)
4. Kankhal (near Hardwar)
5. Badri Narayan (Himalayas)
6. Devaprayag (Himalayas)
7. Gangotri (Himalayas)

8. Ayodhya
9. Mount Abu
10. Nasik
11. Benares
12. Brindavan
13. Srinagar (Kashmir)
14. Almora
15. Nainital
16. Bangalore
17. Puri
18. Dwaraka
19. Pandharpur
20. Tiruvottiyur (Madras)
21. Alandi (near Poona)
22. Juhu (Bombay)
23. Tiruvengoi Hills
24. Tirupathi Hills
25. Papanasam (Tinnevely Dt.)

Of all the places, Rishikesh is the best place in the world. The spiritual vibrations are soul-elevating. The scenery is highly charming. It is a beauty-spot.

Mussoorie, Darjeeling, Simla, Ooty, Kodaikanal and all hill-stations are cool places. They have beautiful scenery also, but they are worldly centres and have no elevating spiritual vibrations. Many people go there for enjoyment and taint the atmosphere, hence they are not suitable for meditation.

In the beginning you must have some conveniences also —such as a library, medical aid and a railway station — and you must be able to get some fruits and milk, otherwise it is difficult to continue your spiritual practice in one place for a long time.

When you are advanced and you go above body-consciousness you can remain in any place.

An aspirant who meditates in a solitary upstairs room in a town will have as much quiet there as in a forest, but he will not have congenial spiritual vibrations. Vibrations play a vital part in the elevation of the mind and in producing one-pointedness of mind. In holy places the vibrations of saints are lodged in the ethereal space and aspirants are highly benefited by these vibrations. Pure feelings, renunciation and the meditative mood come by themselves without any effort or struggle whatsoever. Once some ladies got down from the train in the Rishikesh station. The moment they saw the Himalayas, they uttered: "Who is a son? Who is a father? Everything is illusion. Everything is false!" Such is the powerful influence of vibrations on the mind. It is only sages and yogis who can know at once the nature of vibrations of a place for meditation.

Cave life is extremely good. The ancient sages and seers of India lived in the caves of the Himalayas and did rigorous tapas (austerity). The temperature is quite even in caves. The heat of scorching summer cannot penetrate inside and they are quite warm in winter. As all external sounds are shut out in a cave you can have very beautiful uninterrupted meditation. There is solitude in caves, the spiritual currents are elevating and there is no mundane atmosphere because modern civilisation has not penetrated there. Such are the advantages of cave-life.

However, cave life is not suitable for aspirants who have modern education and a delicate constitution, and who are timid. It is meant for aspirants who have a strong sturdy frame, who are fearless and who have intense power of endurance. Those who have some divine psychic powers; who have a good knowledge of Himalayan herbs; who have strengthened the body by means of special tonic; who have a body which is proof against bites of poisonous insects or creatures; who have psychic powers

conferred by special mantras; who have control over wild animals; who can bear heat and cold, hunger and thirst; who have lost all interest in the attractions of the world, sense-objects and work of any kind; who can meditate for a long time and who have internal dispassion, can remain in a cave.

Some raw young aspirants with weak body and indifferent health, in whom a ray of discrimination and dispassion has recently dawned through study of some religious books or some mishap or difficulties in life, run to the Himalayan caves without any previous preparation or bodily and mental discipline. Just as the mercury in the thermometer runs to one hundred and six degrees in high fevers, so also juvenile bubbling emotions run to one hundred and six degrees to the crown of the head. It cools down quickly. They find it difficult to cope there, and leave the place in a few days. For some, cave life is not suitable. They develop some sort of skin diseases and pale-bloodedness owing to lack of ventilation.

There is another disadvantage in cave life. He who lives in a cave for a long time becomes dull and lazy. He is unable to do any kind of work. He cannot mix with people and is terribly afraid of a multitude of people. His mind soon gets distracted if he is in the company of a few persons, or if he hears a little noise. This is not a balanced life, this is one-sided development. He who dwells in a cave must be able to keep his balance even when he comes to a busy town. This is the sign of his spiritual growth.

Artificial caves with good ventilation can be built underneath the ground in any solitary place, even in your own compound or village. Two walls with a hollow in the middle and pipes to bring in cool air and take away hot air, will keep the cave quite cool. All real aspirants who remain in the world should build one for their meditation. They will be immensely benefited.

The real snug, well-furnished, marvellous, awe-inspiring

cave is in the heart. Even now, modern saints and sages abide there, withdrawing the outgoing senses and mind. They drink the nectar of immortality there, and remain ever-blissful.

May you all dwell in this mysterious, magnificent cave in the heart, alone in communion with your inner Self — the secondless Brahman or the Absolute, the goal, the sole refuge of all!

Seclusion and Meditation

Ekanath, Raja Janaka and others realised God by doing spiritual practices (sadhana) while remaining in the world. The central teaching of the Bhagavad Gita is to realise in and through the world. This is plausible and sounds alright, but it is not feasible for the vast majority. It is easier said than done. How many Janakas and Ekanaths have there been? These people had done their sadhana in their last birth — it is absolutely impossible for the vast majority.

Lord Jesus was missing for eighteen years. Buddha went into seclusion for eight years in Uruvala forest. Swami Rama Tirtha was a recluse in Brahmapuri forest for two years. Sri Aurobindo taught that one should realise amidst activity, but he shut himself up in a closed room for twenty years. Many have taken up seclusion during their sadhana period. You can make a beginning in the world but when you have made some progress you must shift yourself for advanced practices to a suitable place where you will find spiritual vibrations and solitude.

As the will-power in many persons has become very weak because they had no religious discipline or training in schools and colleges when they were young, and because they are under the sway of materialistic influences, it is necessary for them to go in for seclusion for some weeks, months or years to practise rigorous japa and undisturbed meditation. There is no magical pill more efficacious than solitude to reduce the disease of tossing of mind caused by reactions of impure impressions.

Those who have fixed up their sons in life and who have retired from service, and those who have no ties or attachment in the world, can remain in seclusion for four or five years and practise intense meditation and austerity for purification and Self-realisation. This is like entering a university for higher studies or a post-graduate course. When the austerity (tapas) is over, when they have attained Self-knowledge, they should come out and share their knowledge and bliss with others. They should disseminate knowledge of the Self through lectures, conversations, discourses or heart-to-heart talks, according to their capacity and disposition.

A householder with yogic tendencies and spiritual inclinations can practise meditation in a solitary and quiet room in his own house or in any solitary place on the banks of any holy river during holidays, or throughout the year if he is a whole-time aspirant or if he is retired from service.

If you want to retire into solitude for the practice of meditation, if you are a householder with spiritual thirsting for intense sadhana, you cannot all of a sudden sever your connection with your family-people. Sudden severance from worldly ties and possessions will give you intense mental agony and induce shock to your family-people. You will have to break the ties gradually. Stay for a week or a month in seclusion to begin with. Then gradually prolong the period. Then they will not feel the pangs of separation.

The aspirant should be free from hope, desire and greed, then only will he have a steady mind. Hope, desire and greed make the mind ever restless and turbulent, they are the enemies of peace and Self-knowledge. He should not have many possessions either, and can keep only those articles which are absolutely necessary for the maintenance of his body. If there are many possessions the mind will be ever thinking of the articles and attempting to protect them. Those who want quick progress

in meditation during seclusion should not keep any connection with the world by way of correspondence, reading newspapers or thinking of the family-members and possessions.

He who has reduced his wants; to whom the world has no attraction; who has discrimination, dispassion and burning yearning for liberation and who has observed mauna for months together will be able to live in seclusion.

The aspirant should possess serenity. The divine light can descend only in a serene mind. Serenity is attained by the eradication of desires and cravings. He should be fearless also. This is the most important qualification. A timid or cowardly aspirant is very far from Self-realisation.

The aspirant need not bother about his bodily wants. Everything is provided for by God. Everything is pre-arranged by Mother Nature. She looks after the bodily wants of all very carefully in a more efficient manner than they themselves would do, and knows in a better manner what the requirements are and provides them then and there. Understand the mysterious ways of Mother Nature and become wise. Be grateful to Her for Her unique kindness, grace and mercy.

How can sense-control be tested in a lonely forest where there are no temptations? The yoga students of the caves (seclusion) should test themselves after growing sufficiently, by entering the plains. But they should not test themselves every now and then like the man who removed the young plant daily after watering to see if it had struck deep roots or not!

If you are well established in the practice of withdrawal of the senses, if you have the senses under your full control, you can find perfect solitude and peace even in the most crowded and noisy places of a big city. If the senses are turbulent, if you have not got the power to withdraw the senses, you will have no peace of mind even in a solitary cave in the Himalayas. A disciplined yogi who has controlled his senses and the mind can

enjoy peace of mind in a solitary cave. A passionate man who has not controlled the senses and the mind will be only building castles in the air if he lives in a solitary cave in the mountains.

Meditation Room

Have a separate meditation room under lock and key. This is essential. Convert a room into a forest. Do not allow anybody to enter the room. Keep it holy. If you cannot afford to have a separate room, convert a small corner of the room as a meditation room with screens or curtains. Burn incense or scented sticks and camphor, in the morning and evening. Keep a photo of Lord Krishna, Siva, Rama, Devi, Gayatri or your guru or Lord Jesus or Lord Buddha. Place your seat in front of the picture. Keep some books such as *Bhagavad Gita*, *Ramayana*, *Bhagavatam*, *Upanishads*, *Vivekachudamani*, *Yogavasishtha*, *Brahmasutras*, *Bible*, *Zend Avesta*, *Koran*, etc. in the room.

Decorate the room with inspiring pictures of great saints, sages, prophets and world-teachers. Take a bath before you enter the room — or wash your face, hands and legs. Sit in the asana in front of the deity. Sing devotional hymns or repeat guru stotras. Then take to the practice of japa, concentration and meditation.

When you repeat the mantra or the name of the Lord the powerful vibrations will be lodged in the ether of the room. In six months' time you will feel peace and purity in the atmosphere of the room. Whenever your mind is much disturbed by worldly influences, sit there and repeat the name of the Lord for half an hour; you will find an entire change in the mind immediately. Practise and feel the soothing spiritual influence yourself. Nothing is like spiritual sadhana. You will find a local Rishikesh in your own house.

The meditation room should be regarded as a temple of God. Talks of profane nature should never be indulged in there.

No vicious thoughts of rancorous jealousy or avarice are to be entertained there. Admittance should ever be sought in it with a pious and reverent mind, for what we do, what we think and what we speak of leave their impressions on the ether of the room. If no care is taken to avoid the negative ones they will exert their influence on the aspirant's mind and by rendering his mind perverse and restive, make him incapable of attending to his devotion. The words uttered, the thoughts cherished, the deeds done are not lost; they are always reflected on the subtle layers of ether encircling the room and invariably affect the mind. As much effort as possible should be made to overcome them. This is to be done for a few months only. When the habit is changed, everything will be all right.

Best Time for Meditation

Brahmamuhurta is the morning period from 3.30 to 5.30. It is very favourable for meditation. The mind is quite refreshed after good sleep and is quite calm and serene. There is a preponderance of purity in the mind at this time. In the atmosphere also, purity predominates at this period.

The mind is like a blank sheet of paper or a clean tablet and comparatively free from worldly impressions at this period. The currents of like and dislike have not yet deeply entered the mind. The mind can be moulded very easily at this period in any way you like. You can change it easily with divine thoughts.

All the yogis, paramahamsas, sannyasins, aspirants and the sages of the Himalayas start their meditation at this period and send their vibrations throughout the world. You will be immensely benefited by their spiritual currents. Meditation will come by itself without any effort. It is a terrible spiritual loss for you if you do not utilise this period in divine contemplation and if you snore at this time.

O man, it is brahmamuhurta now! Do not snore or roll in

the bed. Throw away the blanket. Get up, start your meditation vigorously, and enjoy the eternal bliss of the inner Self !

In the winter it is not necessary that you should take a cold bath. A mental bath will suffice. Imagine and feel, "I am taking a bath now in the sacred Triveni at Prayag or Manikarnika at Benares." Remember the pure Atman. Repeat the formula, 'I am the ever-pure soul'. This is the most powerful wisdom-bath. This is highly purifying and it burns all sins. Answer the calls of nature quickly, clean the teeth quickly, do not waste much time. Wash the face, hands and feet quickly. Dash cold water on the face and top of the head. This will cool the brain and the eyes. Be quick. Hurry up. Get ready soon. The brahmamuhurta will pass away quickly. You must utilise this precious time in japa and meditation.

Sit in siddha, padma or sukha asana. Repeat some divine stotras or hymns, chant OM twelve times or do kirtan for five minutes before you start your japa and meditation. This will quickly elevate your mind and drive off laziness and sleepiness. Do sirshasana or sarvangasana or any asana for five minutes. Do pranayama for five minutes. This also will make you quite fit for the practice of meditation and will remove laziness and sleepy condition. You will have wonderful meditation. After finishing your japa and meditation you can take to the practice of asana, pranayama and study of the Bhagavad Gita and other religious books.

If you are not in the habit of getting up early, have an alarm clock. Once the habit is established there will be no difficulty. The subconscious mind will become your willing and obedient servant to wake you up at the particular time.

If you are subject to chronic constipation you can drink a tumblerful of cold water or luke-warm water as soon as you get up after cleansing the teeth. This will give you a good motion. You can drink triphala water also. Soak two 'harad' (myrobalan),

two ‘amalaka’ and two ‘thandrikkai’ in a tumblerful of cold water at night. Drink the water in the morning after cleansing the teeth — or you can keep a ready-made powder of these and put one or two teaspoonfuls in the water.

Cultivate the habit of answering the calls of nature as soon as you get up from bed. If you suffer from incurable constipation do meditation as soon as you get up. After finishing your morning meditation you can answer the calls of nature with the help of a cup of hot milk.

Dusk is also favourable for meditation. During brahmamuhurta and dusk, sushumna nadi flows readily. You will enter into deep meditation and samadhi without much effort when sushumna-nadi flows. That is the reason why sages, yogis and scriptures speak very highly of these two periods of time. When the breath flows evenly through both nostrils, know that the sushumna is working. Whenever the sushumna functions, sit for meditation and enjoy the inner peace of the Atman or soul.

You can have good meditation on Sundays, because it is a holiday and the mind is free. Do vigorous meditation on Sundays. Always choose that part of the day or night when your mind is clear and when you are least likely to be disturbed. You can have a sitting just before retiring to bed. The mind will be calm at this time.

Meditation for one hour in the morning and for one hour in the evening must be practised by all to start with. The hours of practice must be gradually increased. After six months or one year, according to your mental calibre, you can have three sittings, a third in the afternoon 4 to 5 p.m. You can increase the period of concentration little by little, to two hours at each sitting. In summer, however, it is rather irksome and difficult owing to heat and perspiration, so have only two sittings during summer. The loss can be made up in winter. Winter is very favourable for meditation. If you have not got sufficient leisure you can meditate

even for a few minutes — say ten or fifteen — at night. You will have no bad dreams at night. The divine thoughts will be carried during sleep also. The good impressions will be there.

Another important point is that the Brahmic feeling must be kept up all the twenty-four hours. There must be an unceasing continuous flow of consciousness. You must not forget the idea of ‘I am Brahman’ or the divine presence even for a single second. Forgetfulness of God is genuine death. It is real suicide. This is the highest sin.

Reasons for Failure

Some people in whom the intellect (reason) is much developed have got the habit of entering into unnecessary controversies and discussions. They cannot remain quiet even for a second. They will create opportunities for heated debates. Too much discussion ends in enmity and hostility. Much energy is wasted in useless discussions. Intellect is a help if it is used in the right direction of enquiry into the nature of God, but a hindrance if it is used in unnecessary discussions. Intellect takes the aspirant to the threshold of intuition — thus far and no further. Reason helps in inferring the existence of God and finding out suitable methods for Self-realisation. Intuition transcends reason but does not contradict reason. Intuition is direct perception of Truth, there is no reasoning here. Reasoning concerns matters of the physical plane. Wherever there is ‘why’ and ‘wherefore’, there is reasoning. In all transcendental matters which are beyond the reach of reason, reason is of no use.

Intellect helps a lot in reflection and ratiocination. But people in whom reasoning is highly developed become sceptical. Their reason becomes perverted also. They lose faith in scriptures and in the teachings of saints. They say: “We are rationalists. We cannot believe anything which does not appeal to our reason. We do not believe in the *Upanishads*. We reject anything that does not come within the domain of reason. We

have no faith in God and sadgurus.” These so-called rationalists are a type of atheist only. It is very difficult to convince them. They have an impure, perverted reason. Thoughts of God cannot enter their minds. They will not do any kind of spiritual sadhana. They say: “Show us your Brahman of the Upanishads.” Those who are of a doubting nature will perish. Reason is a finite instrument. It cannot explain many mysterious problems of life. Those who are free from so-called rationalism and scepticism can march in the path of God-realisation. Give up arguing, become silent and look within. All your doubts will be cleared and you will get a flash of divine knowledge. The pages of the internal book of divine knowledge will be clearly revealed to you. Practise this and feel.

Aspirants should not indulge in sundry talks and miscellaneous thoughts just to ease the mind. They should be serious, they should think and talk of God alone. Too much talking is one of the bad habits which lessen the spiritual power. If a man talks too much he suffers from diarrhoea of the tongue. Quiet people cannot sit even for a second in the company of these loquacious or garrulous people. They will talk five hundred words per second. There is an electric talking-dynamo in their tongues, they are restless people. If you lock these people for a day in a solitary room, they will die. The organ of speech distracts the mind considerably. A talkative man cannot dream of having peace even for a short time. An aspirant should talk only a few words when necessary and that too, on spiritual matters only. A talkative man is unfit for the spiritual path.

Energy is wasted in useless idle talk and gossiping, planning and unnecessary worry. Conserve energy by getting rid of these three defects and utilise it in meditation on God. You can do wonderful meditation then. If you want to do some dynamic worldly activities for world solidarity. You can turn out marvellous work by conserving the energy which leaks through useless channels.

The effects of evil company are highly disastrous. The aspirant should shun all sorts of evil company. The mind is filled with bad ideas by contact with evil company and the little faith in God and scriptures also vanishes. ‘A man is known by the company he keeps.’ ‘Birds of the same feather flock together.’ These are proverbs or wise maxims. They are quite true. Just as a nursery is to be well-fenced in the beginning for protection against cows, etc., so also the neophyte should protect himself very carefully from evil influences, otherwise he will be ruined totally. The company of those who speak lies; who commit adultery, theft, cheating and double-dealing; who are greedy; who indulge in idle talk, back-biting and tale-bearing and who have no faith in God and in the scriptures etc., should be strictly avoided.

Mind is ever changing and wandering. This wandering habit of the mind manifests itself in various ways. You will have to be on the alert always to check it. A householder’s mind wanders to cinema, theatre, circus, etc. A sadhu’s mind will wander to Benares, Brindavan, Nasik, etc. Many sadhus never stick to one place during sadhana. The wandering habit of the mind must be controlled by making it stick to one place, one method of sadhana, one guru and one form of yoga. A rolling stone gathers no moss. When you take up a book for study, you must finish it before you take up another. When you take up any work, you must devote your whole-hearted attention towards the work on hand and finish it before you take up another work. One thing at a time.

Centralise your ideas and develop thereby the inner power of the Self. Centralisation will stop the outgoing habit of the mind and will develop its powers. Centralisation of ideas means centralisation of your energy.

Just as the man who foolishly runs after two rabbits will not catch hold of either of them, so also a meditator who runs after two conflicting thoughts will not get success in either of the

two thoughts. If he has divine thoughts for ten minutes and then worldly conflicting thoughts for the next ten minutes, he will not succeed in getting divine consciousness. You must run after one rabbit only, with vigour, strength and a one-pointed mind. You are sure to catch it. You must have only divine thoughts, at all times. Then you will be sure to realise God soon.

There is always a complaint amongst the aspirants: "I am meditating for the last twelve years, I have not made any improvement, I have no realisation." Why is it so? What is the reason? They have not plunged themselves in deep meditation, into the innermost recesses of their hearts. They have not properly assimilated and saturated the mind with thoughts of God. They have not done regular systematic sadhana nor disciplined the senses perfectly. They have not collected all the out-going rays of the mind. They have not made the self-determination: 'I will realise this very second'. They have not given their entire mind to God, nor kept up an unceasing flow of divine consciousness.

Untrained aspirants generally mistake their own imaginations and impulses for the 'inner voice' or intuition. He who says (or imagines), "I practise deep meditation daily," when he has not removed the evil traits or qualities of the mind, deceives himself first and then others. He is a first class confirmed hypocrite.

Those people who have not practised any yoga discipline or curbing of the senses, thoughts or impurities, will find it difficult to practise concentration and meditation. Their minds will be ever oscillating like a wild bull or a monkey. As you are not used to meditation you feel tired and hungry when you sit for meditation. This will pass off soon. Continue your practice.

When you climb the ladder of yoga, when you walk in the spiritual path, if the memory of past experiences recurs again and again the old mental images will be energised or galvanised. They will express themselves with redoubled force again and

again. They will crowd together or come in packs or in multitudes or in a party and attack you with formidable vehemence. Do not look back, do not remember your past experiences, kill all memory of your past experiences. Remember God. Build up your mental feeling of Brahman strongly. Strengthen it. Keep it steady by regular and constant meditation. A single thought of your past experience will give a new lease of life to the thought-image or memory picture, rejuvenate and strengthen it, and it will pull you down. It will be difficult for you to climb up again.

You will have to note very carefully whether you remain stationary in the spiritual path even after many years of spiritual practice, or whether you are progressing. Sometimes you may go downwards also if you are not vigilant and careful, if your dispassion wanes and you are slack in meditation. Reaction may set in. Some practise meditation for a period of fifteen years and yet they have not made any real progress at all. Why? This is due to lack of earnestness, dispassion, keen longing for liberation and intense, constant sadhana. Just as cultivation in hard land or saltish earth becomes absolutely fruitless, so also meditation done without dispassion becomes fruitless.

You are not able to enter into samadhi because you are not able to practise meditation. You are not able to do profound meditation because you are not able to fix the mind steadily, or concentrate. You are not able to concentrate properly, because you are not able to practise the withdrawal of the senses from the object thoroughly. You are not able to practise this thoroughly because you have not obtained mastery over apana and prana through pranayama, and you are not established in ethics and moral principles which are the foundation of yoga.

If you strain yourself in meditation and go beyond your capacity, laziness and inactive nature will supervene. Meditation should come naturally on account of serenity of the mind induced by the practice of tranquillity, self-control, satiety in the enjoyment

of sense pleasures, and sense control. Atman is the fountain of energy. Thinking of the Atman, the source of energy, is also a dynamic method for augmenting energy, strength and power.

You will get the full bliss of the divine glory only when you dive deep, when you merge deep into silent meditation. When you are on the border-land of divinity or God, when you are at the gate or threshold of God, when you are in the outskirts, you will not get the maximum peace and bliss.

As a result of purification the mind becomes more sensitive, gets easily disturbed by a sound or a shock and feels any pressure acutely. An aspirant must be sensitive and yet have the body and nerves completely under control. The greater the sensitiveness becomes, the more difficult is the task. There are many noises which pass unheeded by an ordinary person but which are tortures to one who is very sensitive.

Artha (wealth) is really anartha (evil). To earn wealth is painful, to protect the wealth is still more painful. If wealth is reduced it is also painful and if it is lost it gives unbearable pain. You cannot earn and amass wealth without doing great sins. Wealth brings much anxiety. Therefore, shun wealth.

Retired officers remain on the banks of the Ganges and practise japa and meditation for several years, but they do not make any solid progress. Why? Because they utilise their big pensions for themselves and for their sons and daughters. They do not spend it on charity. They depend upon money for everything. Let them spend all their money on charity and rely on God. Let them live on alms. They will surely have solid spiritual progress.

If the aspirant has the nature of being offended for trifling things he cannot make any progress in meditation. He should cultivate an amiable loving nature and adaptability. Then this bad habit will vanish. Some aspirants get easily offended if their bad qualities and defects are pointed out. They become indignant

and begin to fight with the man who shows their defects. They think the man is concocting them out of jealousy or hatred. This is very bad. Other people can very easily find out our defects. A man who has no life of introspection, whose mind is of outgoing tendencies, cannot find out his own mistakes. The self-conceit acts as a veil and blurs the mental vision. If an aspirant wants to grow he must admit his defects if they are pointed out by others. He must do his level best to eradicate them, and he must thank the man who points out his defects. Then only can he grow in spirituality.

If you quarrel with somebody or if you have a heated debate with anybody you cannot meditate for three or four days. Your balance of mind will be upset. Much energy will be wasted in useless channels. The blood will become hot. Do not cause pain or suffering to any living being through greed, selfishness, irritability and annoyance. Give up anger and ill-will. Give up the spirit of fighting and heated debates. Don't argue.

You may be living in a solitary cave in the Himalayas and practising meditation, but if the memory of your past experiences in the plains comes and if you allow the mind to dwell on it again and again, you are actually living on the plains only, though your abode is in the solitary retreats of the Himalayas. Further, you do not lead the perfect divine life in the cave, because you lead the past worldly life again subjectively in the sacred cave. Thought is the real action.

Preparation for Meditation

In a lonely place, spread a four-folded blanket and over this spread a piece of soft, white cloth. This will do nicely. If you can get a good tiger skin or deer skin, it is all the better. A tiger skin has got its own advantages. It generates electricity in the body quickly and does not allow leakage of electric current from the body. It is full of magnetism.

Sit on padma, siddha or sukha asana. Keep the head, neck and back in one straight line. Face east or north. A spiritual neophyte should observe this rule. In facing north he is in communion with the sages of the Himalayas and he is mysteriously benefited by their currents.

Free yourself from all passions, emotions and impulses. Subjugate the senses. Withdraw the mind from objects. Then the mind will be calm, one-pointed, pure and subtle. With the help of this trained instrument, the disciplined mind, contemplate on that one infinite Self or God. Do not think of anything else.

Constantly think of God. The mind should always move towards God. Fasten the mind with a fine silk thread to the lotus feet of Lord Siva or Hari and do not allow any worldly thought to enter the mind. Do not allow the mind to think of any physical or mental enjoyment. When it indulges in these thoughts, give it a good hammering. Then it will move towards God. Just as the Ganges flows continuously towards the sea, thoughts of God should flow continuously towards the Lord. Just as the harmonious sound produced from the ringing of bells falls upon the ear in a continuous stream, so also the mind should come towards God in one continuous stream. There must be a continuous divine thought-current from the pure mind towards God, through continuous sadhana.

All physical activities should be completely suspended, all attachments should be ruthlessly cut asunder completely for five or six years if you want to practise meditation, if you want to realise God through concentration of mind. Newspaper reading and correspondence with friends and relatives should be completely stopped, as they cause distraction of mind and strengthen the world idea.

Habitual meditation and habitual silence are great assets

for you in the spiritual path. Meditation gives a lot of spiritual strength, peace, new vigour and vitality. If a meditator gets irritated very often it shows he is not having good, uninterrupted meditation. There is something wrong with his sadhana and contemplation.

You will have to meditate with a calm mind. Then only will you enter into samadhi quickly. If you control the senses and if you become desireless you will have a calm mind. Keen longing for liberation and thoughts of God will destroy all desires. He who has a calm mind is the Emperor of emperors, the Shah of shahs. The state of one who has a calm mind is indescribable.

In meditation and concentration you will have to train the mind in a variety of ways. Then only the gross mind will become subtle.

Signs of Progress

The following are the signs that indicate that you are growing in meditation and approaching God: The world will have no attraction for you. The sensual objects will no longer tempt you. You will become desireless, fearless, I-less and 'mine'-less. Attachment to the body will gradually dwindle. You will not entertain the ideas, "She is my wife; he is my son; this is my house." You will feel that all are manifestations of the Lord. You will behold God in every object.

The body and mind will become light. You will always be cheerful and happy. The name of the Lord will be always on your lips. The mind will be ever fixed at the lotus feet of the Lord and ever producing the image of the Lord. You will actually feel that purity, light, bliss, knowledge and divine love are ever flowing from the Lord to you and filling up your heart.

You will have no body-consciousness. Even if there be body-consciousness it will be in the form of a mental residuum.

A drunkard may not have full consciousness that he has a cloth round his body. He may feel that something is loosely hanging from his body. Even so, you will have a feeling of the body. You will feel that something is sticking to you like a loose cloth or loose shoes.

You will not be attracted by sex. You will have no sex idea. Women will appear to you as manifestations of the Lord. Money and gold will appear to you as pieces of stone. You will have intense love for all creatures. You will be absolutely free from lust, greed, anger, jealousy, pride, delusion, etc. You will have peace of mind even when people insult you, beat you and persecute you. The reason why you are not perturbed is that you get immense spiritual strength from the Indweller, or the Lord. Pain or pleasure, success or failure, honour or dishonour, respect or disrespect, gain or loss, are alike for you.

Even in dreams you will be in communion with the Lord. You will not behold any worldly pictures. You will converse with the Lord in the beginning, you will see Him in physical form. When your consciousness becomes cosmic, conversation will stop. You will enjoy the language of silence or the language of the heart. From vocal speech you will pass on to subtler and subtler forms of sounds and eventually you will rest in the soundless OMkara or soundless Brahman.

Dispassion and discrimination, serenity, self-restraint, one-pointedness of mind, non-violence, truthfulness, purity, forbearance, fortitude, patience, forgiveness, absence of anger, spirit of service, sacrifice and love for all will be your habitual qualities. You will be a cosmic friend and benefactor.

Contentment, unruffled state of the mind, cheerfulness, patience, decrease in the excretions, sweet voice, eagerness and steadiness in the practice of meditation, disgust for worldly prosperity or success and company, desire to remain alone in a quiet room or in seclusion, desire for association with spiritual

aspirants (sadhus) and monks (sannyasins), and one-pointedness of mind are some of the signs which indicate that you are growing in purity, that you are prospering in the spiritual path.

Pure emotions will rise in your heart. You will feel that the whole world is nothing but pure consciousness. The tables, chairs, men, women and other things will all appear to contain this consciousness, just as vessels contain their contents. You will feel that all things are made of this consciousness. This rare experience will give you great bliss. You will feel that the Lord is sporting in all things as this pure consciousness. You will actually lose the sense of the material nature of things around you.

You will have realization with form at the anahata chakra. You will experience nirvikalpa Samadhi at the sahasrara.

If your general health is sound; if you are cheerful, happy and strong physically and mentally; if the mind is peaceful and unruffled; if you get bliss in meditation and if your will is growing strong, pure and irresistible think that you are improving in meditation and everything is going all right.

The Power of Silence

When you enter the silence through deep meditation the world outside and all your troubles will drop away. You will enjoy supreme peace. In this silence is the supreme light of lights; in this silence is undecaying bliss; in this silence is real strength and joy.

Understand the power of silence. The power of silence is infinitely greater than lectures, talks, orations and discourses. Lord Dakshinamurty taught the four youths — Sanaka, Sanadhana, Sanatana and Sanatkumara — through silence. The language of silence is the language of God, the language of silence is the language of the heart. Sit silently and restrain the mental modifications. Sit silently and send out inner spiritual force to

the whole world. The whole universe will be benefited. Live in silence. Become silent. Rest in silence. Know the Self and be free.

Meditation and Work

Advanced yoga students who are householders will have to stop all their worldly activities when they advance in meditation, if they are really sincere. Work is a hindrance to meditation for advanced students. That is the reason why Lord Krishna says in the Bhagavad Gita: “For a sage who is seeking yoga, action is called the means. For the same sage who is enthroned in yoga, serenity is called the means.” (VI-3) Then work and meditation become incompatible like acid and alkali, fire and water or light and darkness.

When you advance in spiritual practice it will be very difficult for you to do meditation and office work at the same time, because the mind will undergo double strain. It works in different grooves and channels during meditation. It finds it very difficult to adjust to different kinds of uncongenial activities. As soon as it comes down from meditation it gropes in darkness. It gets bewildered and puzzled as it has to work in different grooves and channels. When you sit again for meditation in the evening you will have to struggle hard to wipe out the newly acquired tendencies you have gathered during the course of the day and get calm one-pointedness of mind. This struggle brings in headache sometimes. The prana (energy) which moves inward in different grooves and channels and which is subtle during the meditation, has to move in different channels during worldly activities. It has to become very gross during work.

When you have disinclination for work and a desire for meditation only, you can lead a life of complete seclusion, living on milk and fruits alone. You will have good spiritual progress. When there is inclination for work, when the meditative mood vanishes, take up work again. Thus by gradual practice the mind

should be moulded.

You will have to pass through various stages of meditation and finally you will enter into perfect nirvikalpa samadhi or super-conscious state. Form-perception and reflex-perception will totally vanish. Then there will be neither meditator nor meditated. The meditator and the meditated become one,

O aspirants! Struggle hard. Make sincere efforts. Meditate regularly and systematically. Never miss a day in meditation. There will be a great loss if you lose even a day.

No more words! Enough of discussions and heated debates. Retire into a solitary room. Close your eyes. Have deep, silent meditation. Feel His presence. Repeat His name — OM — with fervour, joy and love. Fill your heart with divine love. Destroy the ideas, thoughts, whims, fancies and desires when they arise to the surface of the mind. Withdraw the wandering mind and fix it on the Lord. Now meditation will become deep and intense. Do not open your eyes, do not stir from the seat. Merge in Him, dive deep into the recesses of the heart, plunge into the shining Atman. Drink the nectar of immortality. You will attain the highest knowledge and eternal supreme peace. This is the goal of life, the aim of existence, the final beatitude of life. You will become an established sage or illumined jivanmukta, you will be liberated while living. You will be absolutely free from pain, sorrow, fear, doubt and delusion. You will become identical with Brahman. The bubble will become the ocean; the river will join the ocean and become the ocean. All differences and distinctions will totally vanish. You will experience: “I am the immortal Self. All indeed is Brahman. There is nothing but Brahman.”

9. KINDS OF MEDITATION

There are different kinds of meditation. A particular kind is best suited to a particular mind. The kind of meditation varies according to taste, temperament, capacity and type of mind of the individual. A devotee meditates on his tutelary deity; a raja yogi meditates on the special Purusha or Ishvara who is not touched by afflictions, desires and karmas; a hatha yogi meditates on the chakras and their presiding deities and a jnani meditates on his own Self or Atman. You will have to find out yourself the kind of meditation that is suitable for you. If you are not able to do this you have to consult a teacher or preceptor who has attained Self-realisation. He will be able to know the nature of your mind and the correct method of meditation for you.

Meditation is of two main kinds, saguna (concrete) meditation and nirguna (abstract) meditation. In concrete meditation the yoga student concentrates on the form of Lord Krishna, Rama, Siva, Hari, Jesus Christ, Buddha, Gayatri or Sri Devi. (An aspirant can meditate on the physical form of his guru.) In abstract meditation he concentrates the whole energy of the mind on one idea of God or Atman and avoids the comparisons of memories and all other ideas. The one idea fills the whole mind.

Without undergoing a course of concrete meditation in the beginning, especially for the ordinary type of person, it is absolutely impossible to start abstract meditation at the very outset. The vast majority of aspirants commit a serious mistake in jumping to abstract meditation all at once. They will only have a downfall. The mind is so formed that it demands a form to cling to. Meditation on a form, i.e. a stone-image or a picture, should be practised. The stone-image remains the stone which it is, but the devotion of the devotee goes to the Lord. He is pleased.

Divine grace will surely descend. You will have to superimpose the attributes of God on the stone-image. You will have to imagine that there is the Antaratma (inner Soul) hidden in the image, that there is the all-pervading, indwelling presence or the pure consciousness at the back of it.

A child makes a toy-child (doll) of rags, and plays with it with motherly instincts of nursing and protection. The doll remains the same, but the child develops the motherly instincts for future development and manifestation. Even so, in worshipping an image a devotee develops devotion, bhakti, grace, love, feeling of separation and ecstasy, and eventually supreme love and devotion.

When you meditate with open eyes on the concrete figure of Lord Krishna it is a concrete form of meditation. When you reflect over the image of Lord Krishna by closing your eyes, it is also a concrete form of meditation, but it is more abstract. When you meditate on the infinite abstract light, it is still more abstract meditation. The former two types belong to saguna form of meditation, the latter to nirguna form. Even in nirguna meditation there is a concrete form in the beginning for fixing the mind. Later on this form vanishes and the meditator and the meditated become one.

When you repeat: 'Om Namo Narayanaya' mentally or verbally it is mere japa. When you repeat the mantra and at the same time you meditate on the form of Lord Hari with conch, discus, mace, lotus, yellow silken cloth, armlets, bracelets, etc., it is called japa sahita dhyana. When you progress in meditation the japa will drop by itself and you will have pure meditation only. This will constitute japa rahita dhyana.

By worship and meditation or japa of mantras the mind is actually shaped into the form of the object of worship, and is made pure for the time being through the purity of the object (namely, the chosen deity). By continual practice the mind becomes full of the object to the exclusion of all else, it becomes

steady in its purity and does not wander into impurity. So long as the mind exists it must have an object, and the object of sadhana is to present it with a pure one.

The sound of a mantra repeatedly and harmoniously uttered in japa must create or project into perception the corresponding thing, the deity. The mantras gather creative momentum by repetition through the force of latent impressions.

When one is established in meditation and attains the stage of supreme devotion he sees his chosen deity only, everywhere. The names and forms vanish. A devotee of Lord Krishna sees Lord Krishna only everywhere and experiences the state described in the Bhagavad Gita: “Everything is Vasudeva (Krishna) only”. A jnani or a vedantin sees his own Self or Atman everywhere. The world of names and forms vanishes from his view. He experiences the utterances of the seers of the Upanishads: “All indeed is Brahman”.

When you read a book with absorbing interest and attention your mind gets fixed to the ideas. Even so, in formless meditation on God the mind is fixed on one idea, that of the Atman.

If the readers of works dealing with Atma-jnana take delight therein and are not hasty in longing for the fruits at once, but meditate regularly and gradually upon them, then the mind will by degrees be ripened, and in the end the endless Atman will be reached.

Light of Lights

The Light of lights, which transcends darkness, which transcends inertia, which is attainable through knowledge, is seated in your heart. Nowhere will you find this idea in Western philosophical books. If you study Western philosophical books (say, ten or fifteen volumes) at the end you may find yourself to be an agnostic. That is the difference between the teachings of

the Eastern sages and the writings of Western philosophers. It is only a realised sage like Lord Krishna who can give the essence of human existence and of all the scriptures in one sentence: “*Brahman is the Light of lights, seated in the hearts of all.*” (Bhagavad Gita XV-12 & 15)

That Light of lights which transcends darkness, which transcends the three gunas, is close to you, closer than the jugular vein, closer than your breath. You will have to obtain this through wisdom and meditation.

Every sense organ is a light, because through the organs of perception you get knowledge of the world. The ear is a light, the eye is a light. Intellect is a light. Prana is a light. He who gives light to these — this Light of lights — is your own Atman.

“*I am that Siva (Supreme Being) who is the inner light, the outer light, the innermost light in the heart, transcending the highest. Light of all lights, self-effulgent and the light of the Atman.*” If you meditate on this you will attain illumination and be established in the supreme Light of lights.

“*The sun does not shine there, neither the moon nor the stars nor lightning. Through its’ light all the objects of this world are illuminated. The senses and mind are illuminated. The mind, intellect and senses borrow their light from the ultimate Source, the fountain Source of everything.*”

There is another Upanishadic verse where the method of attaining the Self is given: “*By truth, by austerity, by cosmic consciousness and by constant practice of celibacy, you will find the Light of lights, bright and self-effulgent, in your own body. It is attained by those who are free from all defects and all mental modifications.*”

Fear is a defect. Sleep is a defect. He who has controlled

sleep by meditation on the Atman, who has stopped the vibration of prana, beholds the Light of lights. The world exists because prana vibrates. When there is vibration of prana, there is life. He who has controlled the prana becomes immortal. He who has conquered sleep attains the Light of lights. He rests in his own Atman and enjoys the supreme bliss.

So let us practise meditation, either saguna (concrete), nirguna (abstract) or meditation on light (jyotir-dhyana) and become one with the supreme Light of lights, free ourselves from the trammels of karma and become jivanmuktas — not in the unknown future, but in this very birth.

Patanjali suggests various methods for meditation, such as:

Meditate on the effulgent one in the lotus of the heart who is beyond sorrow. (1 -36)

Meditate on the heart that has given up all attachment to sense objects. (1-37)

Meditate on the knowledge that comes in sleep. (1-38)

And, lastly, he has introduced the sutra:

Meditate on anything that appeals to you as good. (1-39)

Saguna Meditation

This is meditation on an image. This is the concrete form of meditation for people of devotional temperament (bhakti marga). This is meditation on the attributes of God, where you repeat His name and also think of His attributes like omniscience, omnipotence, omnipresence, etc. Your mind will be filled with purity. Any favourite picture of your chosen tutelary deity is excellent for concrete meditation. Enthroned Him in the lotus of your heart amidst a blazing light. Mentally think of His various attributes again and again.

Select any image you like best — either Siva, Vishnu, Rama, Krishna, Jesus or Buddha — according to your inclination or taste; or follow the directions of your guru, who will select the form of God best suited to you. The selected deity will guide you.

Practise tratak on the picture for six months. After six months practice of tratak, meditate on the mental picture of a form or image in the space between the two eyebrows, from half to two hours at a time. See and feel that the deity is present in every object in the universe. When you meditate, mentally repeat the mantra of the deity. Think of the attributes of the deity, such as omnipotence, omniscience, etc. Feel that the pure qualities from the deity flow towards you. Feel that you possess this pure attitude. You will have the vision of your deity in one or two years if you are sincere in your practice.

An archer first aims at grosser, bigger objects. Then he takes up medium sized objects. Finally, he shoots at finer and subtler objects. Even so, one should take to saguna meditation to start with, and when the mind is trained and disciplined well he can have abstract formless meditation. Devotional meditation on a form removes restlessness of mind.

Simple Saguna Exercises

1. Place a picture of Lord Jesus in front of you. Sit in your favourite meditative pose. Concentrate gently with open eyes on the picture till tears trickle down your cheeks. Rotate the mind on the cross, the chest, the long hair, beautiful beard, round eyes and the various other limbs of His body, the fine spiritual aura emanating from His head, and so on. Think of His divine attributes, the various phases of His interesting life, the miracles He performed and the various 'extraordinary' powers He possessed. Then close the eyes and try to visualise the picture. Repeat the same process again and again.

2. Place a picture of Lord Hari in front of you. Sit in your meditative posture. Concentrate gently on the picture till you shed tears. Rotate the mind on His feet, legs, yellow silken robes, golden garland set with diamonds, etc. on the chest, the ear-rings, then the face, the crown of the head, the disc on the right upper hand, the conch on the left upper hand, the mace on the right lower hand and the lotus flower on the left lower hand. Then close the eyes and try to visualise the picture. Repeat the same process again and again.

3. Keep a picture of Lord Krishna with flute in hands. Sit in your meditative pose and gently concentrate on the picture till you shed tears. Think of His feet adorned with anklets, yellow garment, various ornaments round His neck, the necklace set with the kaustubha gem, the long garland of beautiful flowers of various colours, ear-rings, crown set with precious jewels of priceless value, dark and long hair, sparkling eyes, the sacred mark on the forehead, the magnetic aura round His head, long hands adorned with bracelets and armlets, and the flute in the hands ready to be played upon. Then close your eyes and visualise the picture. Repeat the same process again and again.

4. Take the picture of Lord Vishnu with four hands and meditate as follows: see with the mind His feet first, then legs, then His yellow silken cloth, then His golden ornament set with diamonds, kaustubha gem, etc., on His breast, then the ear-ring, then the face, then the crown of the head, the discus on the right upper hand, the conch on the upper left hand, the mace on the lower right hand, the lotus flower on the left lower hand. This is the order. Then come down to the feet and start again to the upper parts. By this method the mind will not run towards objects.

5. This is one kind of meditation for beginners: Sit in padmasana in your meditation room. Close your eyes. Meditate on the effulgence in the sun, the splendour in the moon or the glory in the stars.

6. Meditate on the magnanimity of the ocean and its infinite nature. Then compare the ocean to the infinite Brahman, and the waves, foam and icebergs to the various names and forms. Identify yourself with the ocean. Become silent. Expand, expand.

7. Meditate on the Himalayas. Imagine how the Ganges takes its origin in the icy regions of Gangotri near Uttarkashi, flows through Rishikesh, Hardwar and Benares and then enters into the Bay of Bengal near Gangasagar. Himalayas, Ganges and the sea — these three thoughts only should occupy your mind. First take your mind to the icy regions of Gangotri, then along the Ganges and finally to the sea. Rotate the mind in this manner for 10 minutes.

8. Imagine that there is a fine garden with lovely flowers. In one corner there are jasmine flowers, in another corner there are beautiful cabbage roses, in the third corner there is the 'queen of the night' and in the fourth corner there are champaka flowers. First meditate on the jasmine. Then take the mind to the rose, then to the 'queen of the night' and finally to the champaka. Again rotate the mind as above. Do this again and again for 15 minutes.

These preliminary practices will make the mind more and more subtle and render it fit to take up nirguna (formless) meditation.

Nirguna Meditation

Nirguna means without gunas or attributes. It does not mean that Brahman is a perfect void, but that there are no such perishable qualities as the blue colour of a cloth, etc., in Brahman. Further there are no qualities and possession of qualities in Brahman. Brahman is the embodiment of infinite divine attributes. This is the significance of the term 'nirguna'. Brahman is bliss itself. Brahman is knowledge itself. Brahman is beauty itself. Brahman is light itself.

Even in nirguna meditation there is an abstract image in the beginning. For instance, meditation on ice and its qualities is

concrete meditation, while meditation on oxygen and hydrogen is abstract meditation. Meditation on the physical form of your father is one form of concrete or saguna meditation, while meditation on the qualities of your father is abstract meditation. Meditation on a green leaf is one kind of concrete meditation, while meditation on green-ness is abstract meditation. Meditation on the void, on the blue sky, on the all-pervading light of the sun or an infinite ocean of light and on the formless air or all-pervading ether are all types of nirguna meditation.

Simple Nirguna Exercises

1. There is a living universal power that underlies all these names and forms. Meditate on this power which is formless. This will eventually terminate in the realisation of the absolute, qualityless, formless Consciousness.

2. Sit in padmasana with closed eyes. Concentrate steadily on the formless air. Meditate on the all-pervading nature of the air. This leads to the realisation of the nameless and formless Brahman, the one living Truth.

3. Sit in your meditative pose. Close your eyes. Imagine that there is a supreme, infinite effulgence hidden behind all these names and forms, which is tantamount to the effulgence of millions of suns put together. This is another form of formless meditation.

4. Concentrate and meditate on the expansive blue sky. By these methods of concentration the mind will cease thinking of finite forms and will slowly begin to melt in the ocean of peace, as it is deprived of its contents. The mind will become subtler and subtler.

There are various other ways in nirguna meditation: laya chintana (concentration of the mind with a view to dissolve it) of OM, laya chintana of antahkarana (mind) and laya chintana of elements (progressive meditation from the gross to the subtle on OM, mind and elements); anvaya vyatireka method (the method of positive and negative assertions); neti-neti method (I am not

body; I am not mind); the method of meditation on 'I am sat-chit-ananda Brahman' (existence, knowledge, bliss absolute) and 'I am sakshi' (the witness); adhyaropa-apavada method (method of rejecting the illusory superimposition of one thing on another, e.g. seeing a snake in a rope, and refutation); bhava-tyaga lakshana method (the method of abandoning the idea of the word meaning of 'Thou art That' and contemplating on what it means in essence); repetition of OM with its meaning, etc. and soham (I am He) meditation, which is associated with the breath, and where the mind is fixed on the breath, etc..

Saguna and Nirguna Meditation Compared

Isa, Prasna, Katha, Tapaniya and other *Upanishads* elaborately treat the method of contemplation of Brahman as devoid of qualities. Badarayana in a chapter of the *Brahma Sutras* which deals with the nature of the qualities of Brahman, mentions positive attributes like 'joyful', 'intelligent', etc., as well as negative attributes like 'measureless', 'colourless', etc. Both kinds of attributes refer to the Absolute and yet the contemplation of such a Brahman can be called nirguna meditation or meditation on conditionless Brahman. The chief distinction between the contemplation of the conditioned (saguna) and the unconditioned (nirguna) Brahman is that in the former the devotee looks upon it as really connected with those attributes, while in the latter, positive and negative qualities are not viewed as essentially connected with it, but as suggesting its absolute nature. Hence, 'joyful', 'intelligent', etc., do not enter into the essence of the contemplated Brahman, but act as a gateway for grasping its true nature. In the contemplation of the conditioned Brahman, those and similar other properties form a part of the contemplation.

The term 'nirguna' does not mean that Brahman is a negative concept, or that Brahman is a non-entity or zero. It means that the qualities found here in limitation are found inimitably

in Brahman. It means that the attributes are Brahman's essential nature and that Brahman does not possess perishable qualities of matter like the blue colour of a cloth, but possesses all auspicious qualities. Brahman is nirguno-guni (without and with attributes). It does not mean that Brahman is formless. It means 'He has not got a limited form as that of objects, but has an unimaginable form'. What form can you attribute to infinity? Many have a crude idea of Brahman. They say "Brahman is a block of stone because he has no qualities. He is a regular void, a zero." No. No. They are entirely mistaken. They have not made an enquiry into the nature of Truth. They have various doubts. They have a gross intellect which is unfit for philosophical investigation, discrimination, reflection, ratiocination, etc. They have not studied the infallible *Upanishads*, the right means of knowledge, the right source of wisdom which gives an accurate knowledge of Brahman. The *Upanishads* are infallible because they tally with the experiences of realisation and appeal to the reason of every thinker and philosopher. Their authority is more valid than that of perception or inference.

Brahman is extremely subtle. He is finer than a thousandth part of a point of a hair divided into a thousand parts. A subtle, calm, pure, sharp-pointed, clear and one-pointed intellect is needed for understanding and meditating on Brahman. Many people suffer from suspicion and doubts regarding the validity of the *Upanishads* and the true nature of Brahman. They should purify their minds by selfless service, study the *Upanishads*, develop the four-fold qualifications and have constant satsang. Then they will have an intellectual conviction and an intellectual grasp of Brahman. By hearing the scriptures and meditating on them and by deep meditation they can reach Brahman. This is the royal road. So, Brahman is full of auspicious qualities. He is a lump of luminosity. He is a solid mass of knowledge. He is really more solid than the Himalayas. Knowledge is more heavy and more concrete than a huge block of stone.

In saguna meditation the devotee considers himself as entirely different from the object of worship. The worshipper makes a total, unreserved, ungrudging self-surrender to the Lord. He respects, honours and adores the Lord and depends on Him for everything — for food, protection and his very existence. He looks always for help of any sort from the Lord. There is nothing independent for him. He is an instrument in the hands of the Lord. His hands, legs, senses, mind, intellect and physical body belong to the Lord. A devotee does not at all like the idea of merging as a jnani does. He likes to have his separate entity as a servant and to serve, worship and love the Lord always. He does not like to become sugar but likes to taste sugar and eat sugar, whereas the jnani becomes the sugar itself, as it were. This method of worship is one of contraction. Suppose there is a circle. You have a position in the centre. You contract yourself to a point and merge in the point. This is saguna meditation. This is suitable for people of emotional temperament. The vast majority of persons are fit for this line of worship only.

In nirguna meditation the aspirant takes himself as Brahman. He denies and sublates the false adjuncts or fictitious environments as egoism, mind and body. He depends upon himself, he has absolute self-reliance. The aspirant asserts boldly. He reflects, reasons out, investigates, discriminates and meditates on the Self. He does not want to taste sugar but to become a solid mass of sugar itself. He wants merging. He likes to be identical with Brahman. This method is one of expansion of the lower self. Suppose there is a circle. You have a position in the centre. You expand by sadhana to a very great extent so that you occupy the whole circle, and envelop the circumference. This method of meditation is suitable for persons of fine intellect, bold understanding, strong and accurate reasoning and powerful will. Only a microscopic minority of persons are fit for this line of meditation.

It is comparatively easy to meditate on 'Aham Brahma asmi' (I am Brahman) when you are seated in a steady posture in a solitary closed room. But it is very very difficult to keep up this idea amidst crowded surroundings, while the body moves. If you meditate for one hour and feel that you are Brahman, and if for the remaining twenty-three hours you feel that you are the body, the sadhana cannot produce the desired result. So at all times you must try to keep up the idea that you are Brahman. This is very very important.

A worldly mind needs thorough overhauling and a complete psychological transformation. Concentration and meditation bring about the construction of a new mind, with a new mode of thinking. A contemplative life is diametrically opposite to worldly life. It is an entire change altogether. Old impressions of the world have to be thoroughly annihilated through constant and intense practice carried on with zeal for a long time, and thereby new spiritual samskaras (impressions) have to be created.

Meditation and Action

Man consists of Atman, mind and body. The Atman has two aspects, changeless and changing. The latter is called the world and the former God. World also is nothing but God in manifestation. God in movement is the world. It is not that the world does not exist, but it has a relative existence.

Atman is all-pervading, all bliss, all powerful, all knowledge, eternally perfect and pure. It assumes these names and forms, called the world, of its own free will. There is no desire, because there is no outside object. This will is called cosmic energy (shakti). It is Atman in action. In nirguna Atman, the cosmic energy is static. In saguna, it is dynamic. Atman has

no desire, because it is perfect and because there is nothing which is objective to the Atman. Desire implies attraction, which presupposes imperfection. It is the very negation of will, which is the decision for action from within.

The Atman wills and the universe comes into being. The will of the Atman upholds and governs the universe. Human beings are driven hither and thither by egoism, desires and fears, due to identification with the limiting adjuncts of mind and body. This idea of limitation is called egoism.

The realisation of oneness with all existence, manifested and unmanifested, is the goal of human life. This unity already exists, but we have forgotten it through ignorance. The removal of this veil of ignorance — the idea that we are confined within the mind and the body — is our chief effort in sadhana. It logically follows that to realise unity we must give up diversity. We must constantly keep up the idea that we are all-pervading, all-powerful, etc. There is no room here for desire, because in unity there is no emotional attraction, but steady, persistent, calm, eternal bliss. Desire for liberation is a terminological inexactitude. Liberation means attainment of the state of infinity. It already exists. It is our real nature. There can be no desire for a thing which is already your very nature. All desires for progeny, wealth and happiness in this world or the next and even the desire for liberation, should be completely annihilated and all actions guided towards the goal by pure and disinterested will.

This sadhana — the constant attempt to feel that you are the all — can be practised (or rather ought to be practised) in the midst of intense activity. That is the central teaching of the Bhagavad Gita. It stands to reason also, because God is both saguna and nirguna, with form and without form. Let the mind and the body work. Feel that you are above them, their controlling

witness. Do not identify yourself with the support for body and mind even when it is employed in activity. Of course meditation, in the beginning, has to be resorted to. Only an exceptionally strong-willed man can dispense with it. For ordinary human beings it is an indispensable necessity. In meditation the support is steady, so the sadhana, the effort to feel unity, is comparatively easy. In the midst of activity this effort is difficult. Karma yoga is more difficult than pure jnana yoga. We must, however, keep up the practice at all times. That is absolutely essential, otherwise the progress is slow, because a few hours meditation on the idea that you are the All and then identification with the mind and body for a greater portion of the day, does not bring about rapid or substantial advance.

Meditation is the means, knowledge is the end. Meditation is the process, knowledge is the culmination. In meditation there is struggle, striving or effort. In knowledge there is no striving. So long as there is meditation the meditator is only an aspirant. When meditation ceases and the goal is reached, the meditator becomes the knower of Truth. All meditation and effort cease. He is a liberated sage. When you try to behold a tree there is an effort in the beginning of the perception. Later on it becomes a continuous stream of consciousness of the tree. So is the knowledge of Brahman. In the beginning there is effort, later on the aspirant merges in the object of meditation and there is no further struggle.

I. MENTAL HYGIENE

(SWAMI SIVANANDA)

Mental hygiene deals with the conditions and laws of mental health. It aims at conserving and improving the mental health of the individual and the community. It touches many aspects of practical human life. It represents a systematised mass of knowledge which it derived from researches in psychology, Psychiatry, Medicine, Sociology, Biology, child-study and education.

An understanding of the principles of mental hygiene is highly desirable. A careful practice of these principles will lead to great happiness, strength and joy. Everybody should acquire a general knowledge of psychology, psychological medicine or psychiatry and some ideas about the sound principles of education. They should also attend for sometime a psychological clinic.

Man is composed of three parts. He has a body, a mind and a soul. In dealing with the health of a complete human being you must remember, (1) the body which is visible and tangible and which is the organ of expression of your invisible and intangible mind and soul, (2) the mind and (3) the soul.

II

If you want to possess good mental health you must be always cheerful. You must cultivate this virtue again and again. Cheerfulness acts as the best mental tonic. Depression, gloom, cheerlessness corrode the mind. There is intimate connection between the mind and the body. Body is a mould prepared by the mind for its enjoyment. If there is any physical ailment the mind reacts and vice versa. If there is depression you do not have good appetite, you feel very weak, you cannot walk briskly,

you cannot do any work with intense attention and application. If there is pain in the physical body, you cannot think properly, you cannot meditate. This is the common experience of all. Practice of Ahimsa, Satyam, Brahmacharya, is necessary for maintaining good mental health. Truth is an honest endeavour to convey a real expression of what has occurred or of what is intending to those around you. The truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth can satisfy God and your own heart. Truth cannot be measured by rods and furlongs, minims and ounces. Thought must totally agree with the speech and the speech with the action. This is truth.

Himsa, falsehood, impurity, fill the mind with restlessness, cares, worries and anxieties. You cannot have peace of mind even for a second. How then can there be good mental health where there is no peace of mind?

According to Yoga Vasishtha the cause for all diseases (Adhi-Vyadhi) is in the mind. If the mind is pure and strong, if the will is strong and irresistible, if the mind is free from cravings and desires and Vasanas, you can enjoy a high standard of mental health.

If you are sulky, irritable, greedy and selfish, these bad traits will produce a deleterious effect on your own physical and mental health and will have a definite influence on others. They are also positively harmful to others.

In many cases both mental and physical troubles are due not to inexorable fate or inevitable misfortune. They are destroyed for want of knowledge and as a consequence of a weak and wrong management of the circumstances of life.

If you wish to have a successful and useful life and good mental health it is absolutely necessary for you to acquire the virtue of self-control. Life will be a long series of futilities, a succession of follies, if the quality of self-control is absent.

Sattvic food, Japa or recitation of Lord's names,

Pranayama, regular meditation, Kirtan or singing Hari's names and His praise, study of inspiring, religious books pave a long way for the attainment of good mental health.

Removal of hatred through cosmic love, service, friendship, mercy, sympathy and compassion, removal of greed through disinterested service, generous acts and charity, removal of pride through humility will help you a great deal in the achievement of good mental health.

Fortitude, forbearance, patience, endurance, balance of mind, keep the mind in a good healthy state. Therefore endeavour to possess these divine virtues.

If there is mental fatigue in college boys on account of too much strain and the study, if there is mental fatigue in merchants on account of business worries, if there is fatigue in officers on account of overwork they should take proper rest at once. They should go for a change to the hills or seaside. They should do Pranayama or breathing exercise and take light, wholesome, nutritious diet. They should do Japa and Kirtan vigorously and practise easy Asanas such as Sarvanga, Bhujanga, Yoga Mudra, Uddiyana, Agnisara, etc.

They can play on the harmonium and sing devotional songs.

Prevention is the most important factor in all problems of mental Hygiene. Better education, better upbringing of children, better home conditions and better social surroundings and outlook are all helpful measures in preventive mental hygiene.

Physical health is an important condition of mental health. Strain of any organ, excessive fatigue, and mental strain should be avoided. Your life must be well-regulated and disciplined. You must practise Samyama in all things. Excess of any kind should be avoided. You must stick to the happy, golden medium. Rest is necessary.

Avoid all mental conflicts. Do not interfere in the affairs of others. Have perfect tolerance and broad adaptability. Allow the individuals to grow in their own ways. Every man has his own way, his own predilection, his own natural capacity, temperament and outlook. No two men are alike. Endeavour to remove any undesirable and unsocial trait.

III

Children should be properly moulded by the teachers and parents. They are like malleable metal and like plastic clay. They are highly suggestible. They will do what we tell them to do. They are very imitative. Therefore they will copy our doings. They are eager. They are brave. They fear nothing, not even adverse criticism. If we set before them the path of good life, if we can inspire them with the principles of good physical and mental health and high ideals they will turn out to be good citizens and ideal persons. Every good conscientious teacher should promote a healthy outlook and the sense of well-being on the children for whom he is responsible. He himself should be an ideal man. He himself must have the gift of sunshine within if he wishes to make the children brilliant and healthy. He himself must be full of life, light and joy. He must be endowed with divine attributes and high standard of health, vim, vigour and vitality.

An unhappy, worried, sickly teacher who is full of private griefs and woes cannot guide the children and lift them up to a high standard of life. He himself needs teaching and education first.

Books suggested for further study

1. Thought Power — Swami Sivananda
2. Mind, its Mystries and Control — Swami Sivananda
3. Conquest of Mind — Swami Sivananda
4. Concentration and Meditation — Swami Sivananda
5. Conquest of Anger — Swami Sivananda
6. Conquest of Fear — Swami Sivananda
7. Sure ways for Success in Life and God Realisation — Swami Sivananda
